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Everybody's
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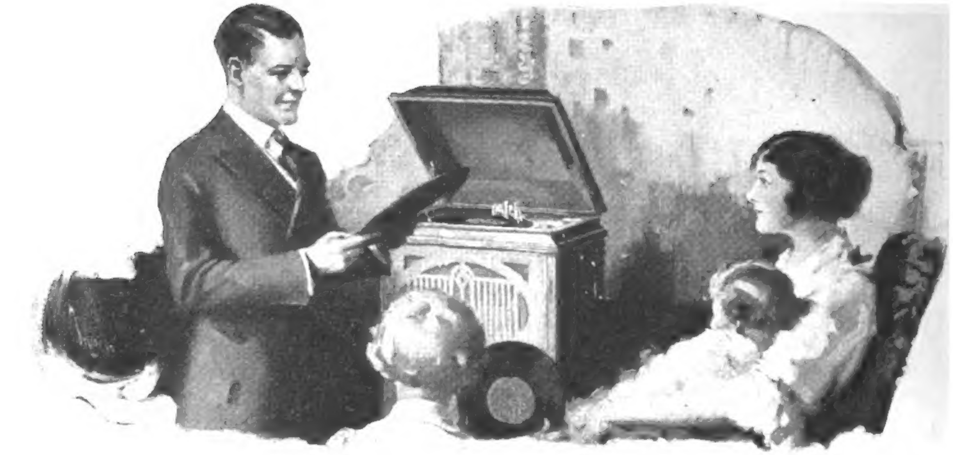
Beginning
"THE BELOVED PAWN"
By Harold Titus
A Tremendous Drama of the Great Lakes



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It Brings All Artists, All Music, Into the Home

When you choose a Brunswick, you invite all the world's music into your home. *All* the great artists, orchestras, and stars of the concert and operatic stages.

For The Brunswick plays all makes of records at a turn of the hand. No "attachments," no bother.

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An Exclusive Brunswick Feature

The Ultona—the all record player—is a part of The Brunswick. It is designed to play any and every make of record correctly—to bring out the true musical value of the composition. It is not a "make-shift," but is built in The Brunswick. (See illustration.)

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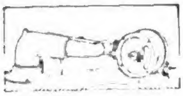
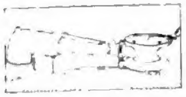
Hear The Brunswick. And hear Brunswick Records—*the world's clearest phonograph records.* A demonstration, which will be given gladly by any Brunswick dealer, will amaze you.

The Remarkable Brunswick Ultona which plays all makes of Records

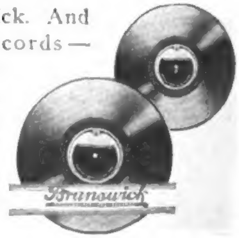
A turn of the hand—that's all



Shows Ultona playing any record, using steel or fibre needle.



To play record requiring diamond point, you [illegible] Ultona



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Manufacturers—Established 1845
CHICAGO NEW YORK CINCINNATI TORONTO

BRUNSWICK
PHONOGRAPHS AND RECORDS

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HAVE you ever considered why our richest men come from our poorest boys? Isn't it a strange thing that it is almost invariably a young fellow who starts life without a cent in the world, without education, without influential friends—in short, without one single solitary advantage—who accumulates millions of dollars? Isn't it a miracle that inside of a comparatively few years a man can rise from abject poverty to fabulous wealth?

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Astonishing, certainly—but more important, it is wonderfully inspiring. For it means that no man need be held down by circumstances. Once he knows the "millionaire's secret," he can put it into operation regardless of all obstacles that seem to block his path. He suddenly finds that everything he touches turns to gold—money flows in upon him—fortune showers him with its favors. Everything he wants seems to come to him just as surely and easily as day comes after night.

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Facts That Will Amaze You—Sent FREE

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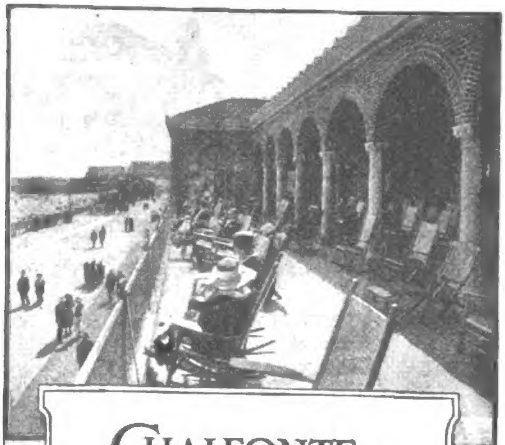
City .... State ....

Age .... Occupation ....

EVERYBODY'S
November 1922

Published monthly by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $2.50 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Aug. 16, 1899, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entered as second-class matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada.

Volume XLVII
Number 5



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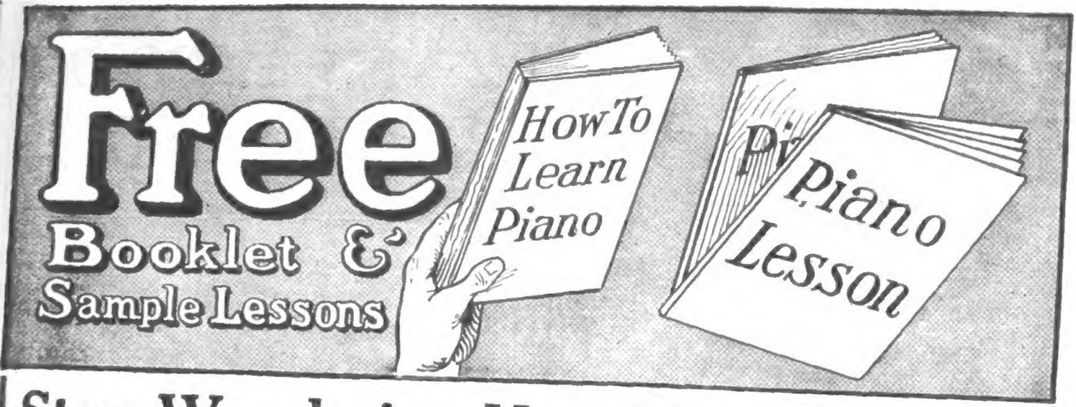

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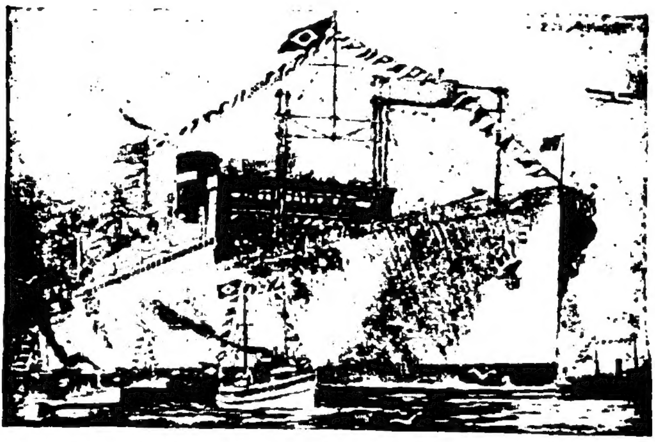

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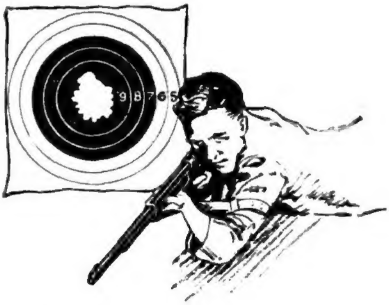

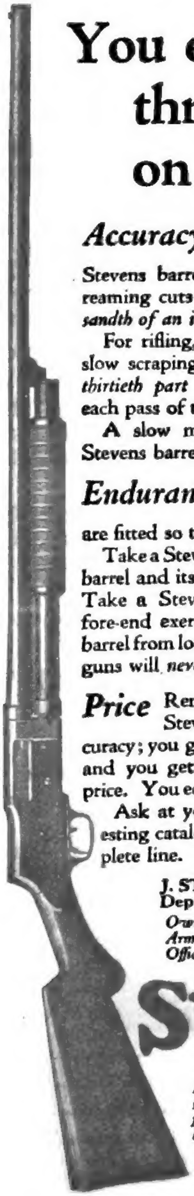

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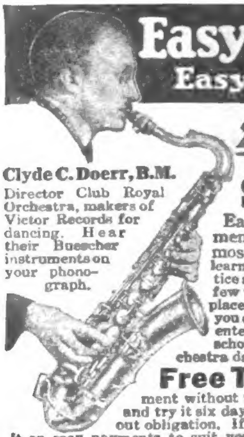

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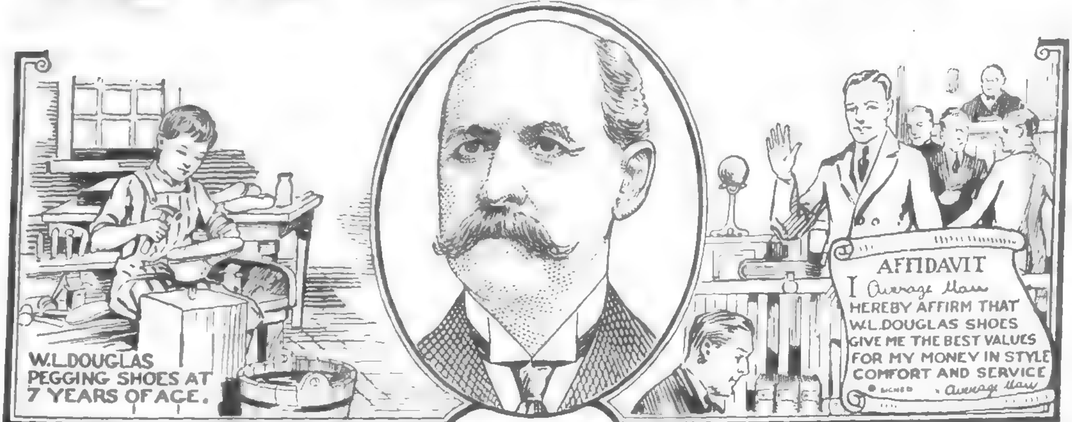
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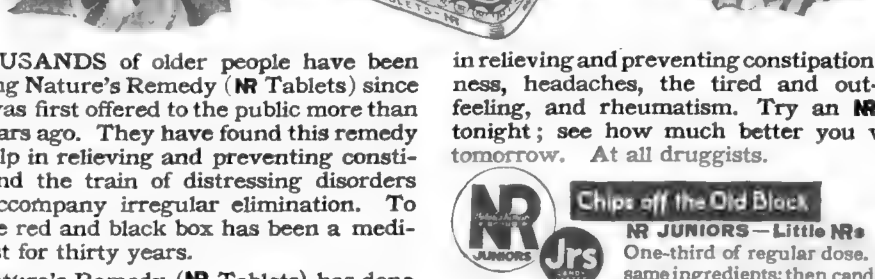
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Everybody's

NUMBER FIVE NOVEMBER, 1922 VOLUME XLVII

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NUMBER FIVE NOVEMBER, 1922 VOLUME XLVII

Values

THE thing that seems to me a sort of sadness in life is to have each and every thing placed before all other things upon a basis of money value.

I go to work for a farmer.

He says to me,

"What wages do you want?"

Well—I say to him,

"Let's talk about that when the job is done."

He does not like the suggestion. He fears that he will be "skinned" by me. He is fearful that I shall "hold him up."

I say,

"I guarantee full satisfaction, or you shall pay me nothing."

It takes a man a long time to at last unbend and to see the plain common sense of the affair. No one but myself can lose. If my toil dissatisfies him, he pays me not a cent, and I lose both soul and coin together.

This, a surely sensible proceeding, is one practically unheard of, and undreamed of.

Yet what simpler? Why not trust the one of us the other?

BILL ADAMS.

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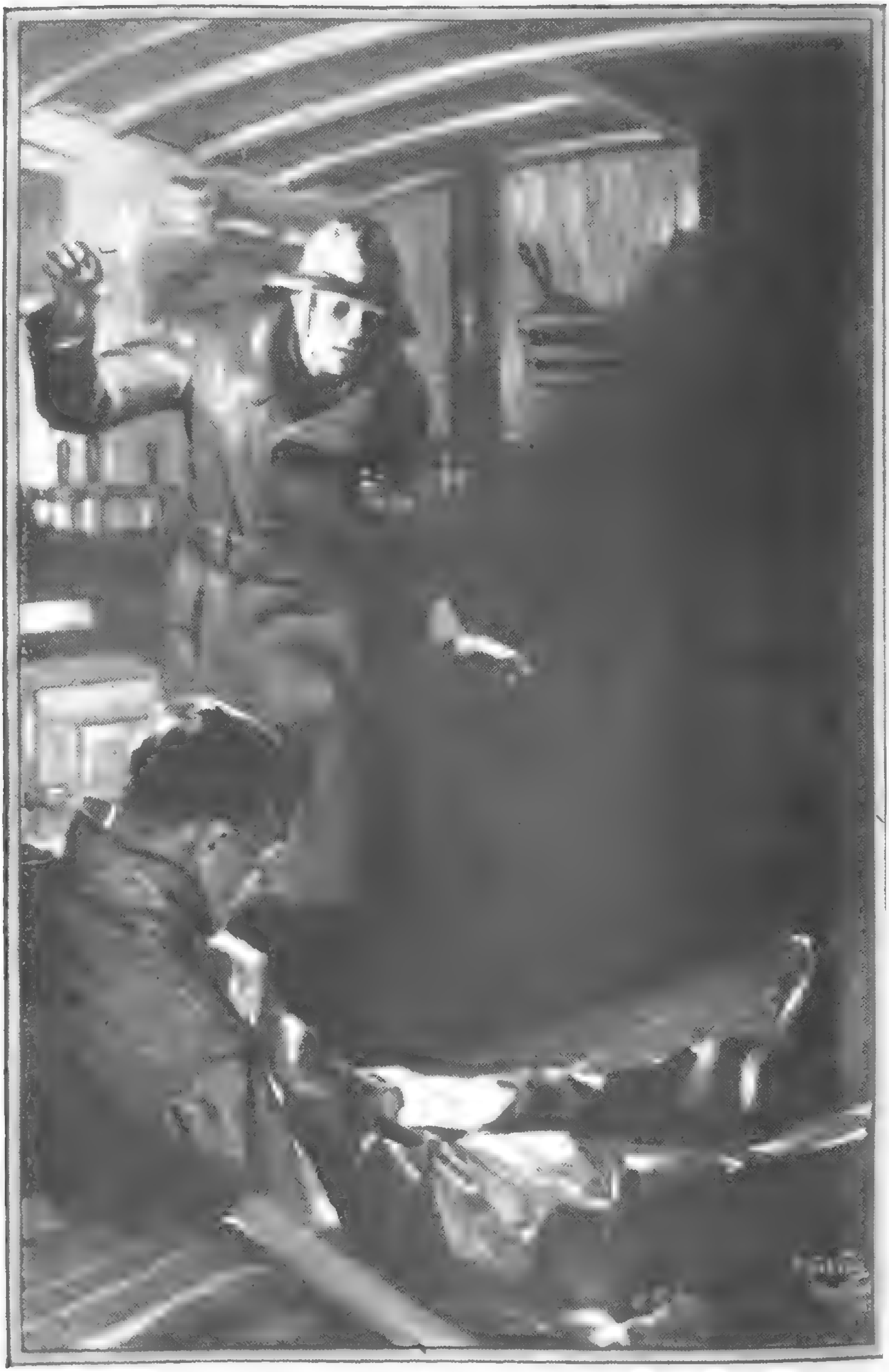


The indecision which had been on the girl from the time she came aboard vanished. This man could hurt no one.

THE BELOVED PAWN

A New Serial by the Author of "Foraker's Folly"

A Robust Novel of Action Set in a District—the Great Lakes—Which Has Been Made by Vigor of Brain and Muscle. The Chief Ingredients Are Adventure and Wholesome Heart-Interest—a Combination That Wins

By Harold Titus

Illustrations by Stockton Mulford

THE Beaver Islands lie crouched in the vigorous blue of Lake Michigan not far from where this inland sea surrenders its flow to the Straits of Mackinac. There are nine in all, ranging from Beaver Island itself, which is a dozen miles long by half as many at its greatest width, down to a boulder hummock showing above the shoals and designated on charts as Hat Island. To the westward of Beaver lies High Island, and beyond it little Gull. North and east from High, Trout, Whiskey and Squaw Islands punctuate an eight-mile line which brings the last named to the northward of the entire group. On the other flank—aside from tiny Hat—lies Hog Island in its big area of bright shallow water, and in the center of the group, the very heart of this archipelago, rests Garden Island, with its green forest, its safe harbor, its isolated people.

To the northward, lean freighters ply from the straits for Poverty Island, Death's Door or other passages, Milwaukee or other ports above; to the eastward, luxurious passenger-vessels steam down past Skillagalee light toward Grand Traverse Bay, the Manitous, the east-shore cities and Chicago. All about and within sight of the Beavers is the come and go of today, and yet they are untouched by it. Their fish go out to feed cities; their sons go out to man ships, but little of the outer world reaches the islands, and their people fight the lake and the weather and the luck of fishermen, as their fathers did before them.

It was so in the beginning, when those intrepid French explorers saw the great uninhabited island sprawling there in uncharted water, a score of miles and more from the untraveled mainland, with a hook like a flat tail making a harbor at its lower end, and named it Isle de Castor. They were the first whites to set foot there likely. What they did is forgotten, and even the name they gave has now been Anglicized. Then, generations later, came King Strang with his Mormon followers, and dominated and persecuted and died violently where gentle ripples lap the shining beach round which now stretches the village of St. James. The Irish followed and fought the dead Strang's influence and stamped it out and established themselves and their culture; they still persist. Other sects than the Mormons have thrived and perished in the isolation of the group. The native Indian still transports his dead across many miles of water to insure unbroken rest in the quiet of the islands. Strange men have sought the goodly seclusion offered. Lore has endured; fictions have become fact; generation has given way to generation without developing the impulse to change the Beavers. And King Norman has ruled on Garden Island.

When that other man who called himself a king came here, it was with a measure of pomp and dignity. He had followers; he had the driving purpose of religious fanatacism, but when King Norman came, it was without the fervor of a pilgrim seeking new soil for his faith and deeds, without a follower except the shy little girl with the great blue eyes and blue-black hair, her face whitened by infancy spent in a convent school, and the sooty-faced ruffian in the fire-hole of the rickety tug which Eldred wheeled out of the straits himself—for that was all men called him when he came: Norman Eldred.

It was spring, with the net-stakes just going in when he appeared. They saw him come into Beaver Harbor, pass the light, skirt the docks, standing on the stern with hands clasped lightly behind his back, head bowed and shoulders sagged a trifle, as though the head, so held, were a great weight for them. The girl, Eve, was at the wheel, and she peered out at St James almost as though it might be a hostile village. They swung past the last dock and went back into the lake, discarding the only settlement on all the islands as a stopping-place. Eldred explored the remainder of the group and finally dropped his anchor in Indian Harbor and went ashore on Garden Island, where no whites lived and where the Indians were few and scattered.

A log house stood close to the beach in not bad repair, and Eldred and his red-haired helper, Dimmock, made this habitable. Net-reels went up, and within a week he was established with a suggestion of permanence, had twine set and was lifting. He was ragged; the child's face was pinched with privation; his tug was hardly seaworthy—a tramp fisherman, but there was that about him in his silences, the strength of his great body, his alternate quickness and deliberation which made men know he would not fail.

He did not fail anywhere, unless one considers his relations with other men and believes that respect and friendship are desired possessions. The next spring found him with another boat and more luck, and his fortune with fishing held until his fleet numbered six, and thirty men lived in the slab shacks he built behind his net-reels. These men were called the scum of the lakes, and they were no more than just that—hard men only would work for King Norman, and that seemed to feed his strange pride; he wanted only hard and rough men.

He built the big white house where he lived with his daughter; he handled fish for the few Indians and built a store where they and his men traded; he made his harbor a shipping-point and was not dependent on any other port.

He was a friend to no one. In the first place, his manner of speech and action were different, lifting him above usual men and making a barrier against acquaintances. When a few tried to penetrate his strangeness and reserve, they were repulsed ungently, and that made Eldred singular; but it was when Jode MacKinnon came across from Big Bay de Noc to fish the waters off the island, and seemed for a time to get along with the newcomer only to meet with tragedy, that men realized there was something horrible about this man. Most of them shunned him, and those who tried to cross him only encountered disaster, and before long it was recognized that the only way to maintain peace was to allow Eldred his way.

The good priest then at St. James, reading casually in a book on genealogy, came across the name of Eldred. It is Anglo-Saxon and means "the Terrible." 'He is well named," the father said, and men echoed that. Eldred the Terrible! He was no less, surely.

AND all this time the girl was growing. The pinched look left her face; she developed into a slender, erect, wonderful young woman, her eyes the color of the lake on a June morning, her soft skin mellowed by clean winds, her hair as black—as her father's heart, men said. She kept much to herself and always she went with her father on his rare trips to St. James or Charlevoix or into the straits, and then she was stared at curiously. She was King Norman's daughter, and that would have been enough without the stories—even the story of what she helped do to Jode MacKinnon.

There was love in Eldred for the girl, a fierce passion showing when he let his gaze linger on her face and seeming more in evidence when others were about who also looked at her. It was the hunger of his heart reflecting itself in his eyes—hunger and jealousy.

Yes; jealousy was there, and well proven. Eve was beginning to mature when Eldred brought from far down the state a spinster school-teacher to keep his house and go on with the girl's education. Eve took to the lessons with that eagerness which is the first creation of monotony, and it was only a few days before she found in the woman herself at least as great an interest. Then, without explanation, the woman was sent away, and Anna John, a paunchy squaw, was brought in to keep the house.

Stories of the girl became part of the Eldred tradition. To her, Eldred had given the responsibility of the store, and it was there, with just the counter between them, that she had her only contacts with the men of the crew. Otherwise, they kept away from her because, whenever a new man came to work, Eldred gave him but one instruction: "You will talk to my family only when spoken to. Dimmock will give you other orders." But when they did meet Eve in the store, she showed hostility, a coldness, a superior indifference. With a girl of her beauty on the one hand and men such as they on the other, there could not help being danger, and it was to forestall this that Eldred made the rule which gave men no opportunity to be sly. An indiscreet word, even an uncautious look, and punishment was forthcoming. Such punishment! Those beatings which Eldred had given men were tales to tell, indeed. For her attitude of being of better clay, and because the urge which she touched in all men only meant danger, she was disliked, ridiculed foully when men were in safe company, and made the central figure of many an astonishing yarn.

Some of these stories told about Eve had the background of probability and the evidence of witnesses; many others were vague, conflicting tales of harshness and cruelty. But regardless of their intrinsic worth, they were remembered and retold and passed on until King Norman's daughter became an outstanding figure, to be shunned as her father was shunned; and if this had not been so, if people had been skeptical of the things that were said of her, they would have ceased much of their doubtings when the story seeped over the lake that she, as a little girl, had had a part in the thing which happened to Jode MacKinnon. It was likely, if one accepted the character which Eldred's men gave to Eve, and it dovetailed with the story that Jode's helper left behind him when he fled from Garden Island and to the mainland, to get as far away as he could from the spirit he had seen flaming in Eldred's eyes that night on the beach, with the surf roaring in across the reef and wreckage coming ashore.

And so King Norman ruled, sufficient unto himself, with the commerce of an every-day world slipping past his dominion, amassing wealth, making his position more secure, the great passion for the girl growing with the years, standing now and again on the decks of his tugs as they passed the lake-ships, the broad brim of his black, round-crowned hat blown back, hands clasped lightly behind him, head forward—truly a kingly figure, powerful, aloof, unchallenged. And Eve became a woman, knowing only Garden Island and its life—her father, who was called a king, and the men of his crew, who were called the scum of the lakes.

THE time was early May, but there was little spring in the gale which rushed down from the northwest, sending great gray seas heaving across Lake Michigan, clipping their dingy crests and bearing the spray along in a scud to mingle with the falling snow and make the weather thick as night. It wailed through the naked trees of Garden Island and swept on into the murk beyond with a steady, hungry roar—the hunting-cry of savage weather.

Smoke poured from the chimneys of the shacks where the crew smoked about stoves to keep off the chill. The beach was deserted, and Eldred's fleet, tied nose to stern along the wharf before his long net-house, seemed to snuggle close, as though conscious of their luck in being there, safe.

It was no day for craft or men to stir, but craft were on the lake, and there was at least one on Garden Island who had braved the weather.

EVE ELDRED crouched in the shelter of balsams that grew on the beach beyond the buildings, protected from the cold by a flaming red Mackinaw jacket, gray skirt and laced boots. On her head was a yellow oilskin hat, its strap fitted snugly beneath her chin. Beside her, a gaunt mongrel dog squatted on his haunches, ears erect, bright eyes fast on the harbor entrance. The girl spoke excitedly.

"Another boat, Friend! They can't make it; they've got to get shelter."

She watched the distressed gasoline-boat that lurched into sight, rolling heavily while it nosed its way into the channel and straightened out for the run across the reef.

"That's the supply-boat from the light," she said, as though the dog could understand. "They've been to St. James and can't get back."

She watched the boat come into the quiet water of the harbor and make for the dock, and then she sank back to her heels with some of the enthusiasm gone from her face.

"Maybe the keeper's wife's aboard. I'd like to talk to a woman again," she said dully. "There's Gam Gallagher out there"—looking toward a fishing-boat that now swung at anchor, after having put in with its motor working erratically. "He couldn't get home. That's the only reason he came here. That's the only reason anybody comes. He looks nice, too."

She rose to her feet with a sigh and shoved a loose strand of hair back under the hat, then parted the branches that concealed her and looked up toward the big white house. There was in her face a childish quality, a gentleness and a timidity that would have made one who had listened to the stories about her pause and consider.

A voice whipped past her on the gale, and the sounds of heavy feet. She crouched again quickly, a hand on the dog's neck, and remained so until the men had entered the nearest shack, when she relaxed slowly and stood up, watching the harbor where people were—people she did not know and would like to talk to.

She had always wanted to know about people, but ever since she could well remember there had been barriers to that; besides, there had been so few opportunities that the longing for new friends which had once been high in her heart had lost much of its reality. Her experience in the convent had been strange and rigid and unreal; impulses which were inherent had been repressed, and she had looked on her departure from the place with her father as liberation. She had been patient, and her patience had been rewarded by the coming of Jode MacKinnon, and that luxury had ended with such a shock. Then more waiting and wondering and wanting; and the school-teacher had arrived and been sent away before the girl could wholly comprehend that this delight of companionship was hers. Thereafter she settled to the waiting again, and occasionally questioned her father, for her patience was not as steady as it was once; but he gave her no satisfaction—just talked vaguely about people who were envious and inferior.

The impulse to keep away from the men who worked on the island was a newer thing than this loneliness. When she was a little girl, it had been her father's warnings that had kept her to herself, but after she developed and passed that divide which brought her into womanhood, she needed no warning other than that in her heart. She had to meet them in the store, and that was all her courage could bear.

Perhaps there was little danger from most of them, but her distrust of all men had grown lately.

Particularly of one, a Frenchman, Jean Mosseau. He had never spoken to her except when he bought things in the store, but he watched—watched so steadily and so knowingly, as though his eyes were saying things which she did not understand. He would loaf in the shadows of the store and keep his bright eyes on her until she felt chills up her back and flushes in her cheeks. When she walked near the beach where he was at work, she could feel him looking, looking after her; even when she was with her father and Mosseau was within sight, she could sense that his eyes were on her face when Eldred was not watching. The Frenchman had been in the woods lately getting out stakes for the nets, and Eve, had kept near the house because of it, but now his task was about through, she knew, and soon she would feel free to go back there through the forest. That would help, for it was spring and things were growing. Anyhow, she told herself now, perhaps Mosseau was no more dangerous than any other; surely he had never transgressed——

The dog beside her whined and stiffened.

"What's— Oh, *another* boat!"

A thrill was back in her voice, and her eyes were animated as she stepped clear of the trees to see a hooker wallowing in through the buoys like a thing in conscious agony. It was a small schooner, flying a jib only, and with the tattered remnants of a foresail snapping from the gaff. She was heeled low under that rag, and, in her fresh white paint, she looked like a ghost ship coming from the grayness of fading daylight, now touched by a faint luminosity—a ghost, but a jaunty ghost, for her spars had a fine rake and the tilt of her slender bowsprit was nothing less than saucy.

ON THE deck was a lone figure clinging to the wheel, bowed over as though fighting against sickness. The man moved sluggishly; the jaunty clipper bow, splitting the sullen water of the harbor, swung up; the spars lost some of their pitch, and she rode on even keel into the shelter.

The canvas flapped as the man let go lines and stumbled forward. He nearly fell, but caught at the shrouds and kept on to the bow, where a kedge-anchor lay It required great, awkward efforts for him to get it to the rail, but he succeeded and let it go, and the chain ran out with a sound lost in the hubbub of weather. The hook bit the bottom; the slack went out of the cable; the hooker stopped short with a dip of her nose and a slatting of the jib, and the man, bulky in oilskins, worked with the halyards. The sail came down jerkily and lay untidily in the bow, flopping like a wounded wing. The man bent over, made a momentary effort to furl and pitched forward to the deck.

An inarticulate exclamation broke from the girl's parted lips. The man lay where he had fallen, moving slowly in a struggle to regain his feet.

"Friend, he brought her in alone, and out of that," the girl said. "Why, he may be hurt; he may need—" She checked herself, irresolute; then, with a jerk of the head and a quick look about, she said, with something like doggedness in her tone, "Well, *some*body's got to go."

She trotted swiftly along the beach to where a yawl was drawn up, shoved it off and stood in the stern and sculled deftly toward the hooker, while Friend, his paws on the gunwale, watched the man who had fallen crawl slowly aft, laboriously open the scuttle of the cabin companionway and half slide, half fall from view.

At that, the girl stopped sculling and looked back at the beach. No figure stirred, and in the lighted window of the big house she could see her father's shadow. She again made that somehow defiant movement of her head, sent her boat alongside the hooker, made the painter fast and scrambled aboard.

On deck she stood still a moment, listening. No sound but the yelp of the wind in the rigging and the heavy flop of the neglected sail. She went to the open companionway.

"Down there!" she called, and waited. "Are you all right?"

No reply for a moment; then a stir and an incoherent mumbling. She moved as if to step to the ladder, hesitated and then, as a half-choked moan came upward, slipped down the narrow steps. Everything was dark, but when she stood still, she could sense a figure stirring near her feet.

"Are you hurt?" she asked again.

Then a man's voice, strained and weak: "No. Strike this match—will you?"

She felt a hand waving uncertainly before her and grasped it. The flesh was stiff and wet and very cold, but in the fingers was a bunch of matches. She struck one and held it high. His sou'wester was off, and she had a flash of a white face, half-closed eyes, a mouth that drooped with exhaustion. He was propped against a bunk and was trying to smile as he struggled to get up. The indecision which had been on the girl from the time she came aboard vanished. This man could hurt no one.

A lamp hung in gimbals at Eve's shoulder, and she lighted it, heart hammering, then looked down at the man again as he floundered to his feet and sank back on the bunk. She had seen men come off the lake before with their vitality sapped by wind and cold. She knew what it meant, and looked about quickly. A tiny galley-stove was there, with kindling in a box.

"Stay there," she said. "I'll fix you up. It's quicker than taking you ashore." But her tone on that last implied that, under no circumstances, would she have taken him ashore.

She dropped to her knees, struck the match and leaned low. Her young face was very earnest as she waited for the wood to ignite. A tendril of flame crept up and wavered and caught and grew, shooting a warm glow into her face, and with a whiff of satisfaction she closed the door, leaned back and looked at the man.

He was staring at her with a dull sort of wonder, an expression which, without the cloud of half-consciousness, might have been amazement. When she moved, that passed, and his head drooped.

"Much obliged," he muttered.

He could not help himself, so she fumbled at the snaps of his oilskin and opened it.

"Can you take it off?" He nodded and grunted and tried and failed. She seized the sleeve and pulled it from his arm, saying: "You can't do anything; you're all gone— Why, you're wet! You've been overboard!"

"Overboard," he muttered. "Damned cold!" Speech and movement, though they drew on his strength, seemed to clear the man's faculties. "Lucky you're here. Lay hold those boots, will you? Can't bend to 'em. Then put on some coffee—if you will——"

Eve dropped to her knees and tugged at the boots, which spilled water across the floor as they came off, and then she turned to the cupboard behind the tiny stove, found the pot hanging there and coffee on a shelf.

"Obliged," he murmured, running a hand through his light hair and watching her as though he wanted to force the stiff flesh of his face into a smile. "I'll get along—now——"

The girl hesitated.

"You're pretty weak. You— I'll stand by on deck until you get changed."

She slipped up the ladder and walked to the rail, watching the shore while Friend nosed her hand. Figures were moving in her father's house, and she frowned. Soon she heard his voice:

"On deck, there! All right!"

She went below, leaving the dog at the top of the ladder, and found him barefooted but in dry shirt and trousers, hunched over the stove, shivering. He turned his face and smiled this time, and shuddered again as the chill which lake water had put in his bones convulsed him.

Eve loosened her jacket, for the place had warmed very quickly, and watched the man as he rubbed his forehead. He was like his cabin—neat and compact. He was young. His shoulders were broad; his hands and feet were large and competent. He had youth and vitality.

"Were you alone?" she asked.

"Alone—thank God!"

"And where did you come from a day like this?"

"Somewhere west of lee." He laughed feebly.

"You mean you lost your bearings?"

"That's it—lost. Everything all right above?" he asked.

"All snug; you did it."

He made a sound that was like a laugh.

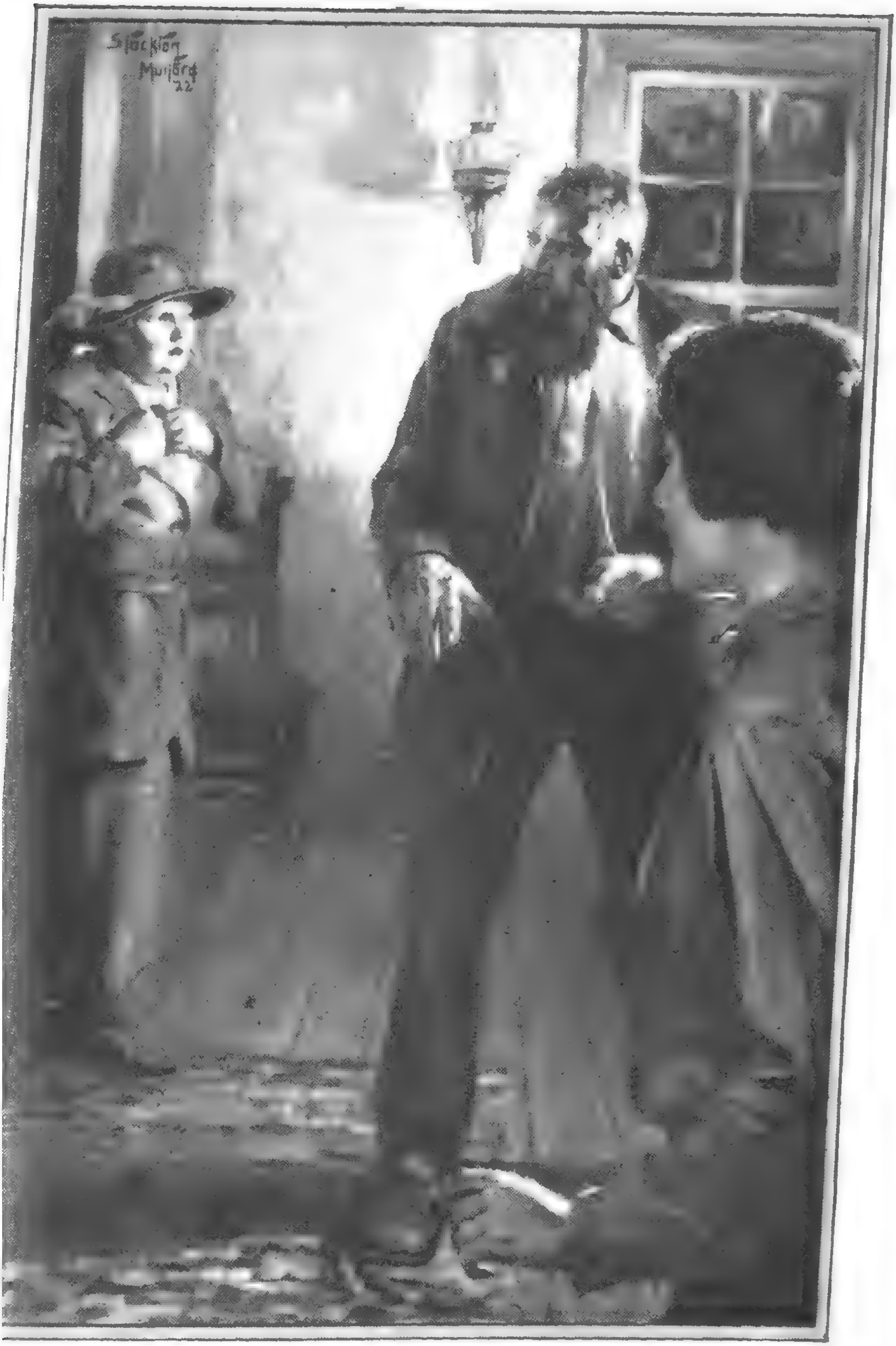
"I didn't know. I didn't remember. I thought the *Annabelle* was all through. Saw some buoys—an' a boat standin' in. My head wouldn't work—not much."

He rubbed the palm across his eyes unsteadily. For a time, silence. He shivered again and hugged his body with his strong arms, crouching closer to the warmth. The coffee boiled over with a sharp hiss, and Eve, snatching it up, poured a thick cup full of the scorching drink.

"Obliged—thanks! Ah, that chases the cold!" He held the cup in his two hands and sipped it noisily. Until it was half gone—and he drank very slowly—no further words were spoken.

FINALLY the man began to talk, gaze unfocused before him, a grim smile on his lips.

"Whisky and water—they won't mix; not a lot of whisky an' a—lakeful of water. A man's a fool to try it." He laughed shortly and drank again. "Last thing I remember last night was tryin' to stay sober enough to get gas before I pulled out of Escanaba. Handle her anywhere alone with the kicker. Next thing, I was outside Poverty Island passage with the tank dry



turned and flashed at King Norman. "Some day my cowardly heart'll find a little starch, and when it does—" "It will be interesting—very interesting," he broke in.

an' a squall bustin' out of the no'thwest with me alone to get canvas on her."

He twisted his head seriously.

"Kind God, how it blew! Me workin' alone with foam comin' aboard so's you could hardly see the length of her. I did it, though! Got her under way an' then didn't dare try to get back into a lee because it was snowin' so hard. Headed for Beaver Island, thinkin' I could get across with it on my quarter, all right. Thought the wind 'd hauled after the squall settled to a blow, an' didn't find out till the fo'sail blew out that I'd dropped my clasp-knife under the compass-box an' threw her off a half-dozen points. Sailed that way Lord knows how long!"

He drank again and rubbed his head and laughed.

"That was when I went overboard, after th' fo'sail went into ribbons. Lord—can feel it yet! Squeezes breath out of you like you'd squeeze the life out of a frog. Lucky day, though. Line hangin' over the rail; caught it with one hand an' got back——

"Cold? Never knew what the word meant before! Wind and snow. Seemed I'd sailed for weeks. Couldn't think; could only keep goin'. Seas broke up once, an' knew I was in shoal water, but couldn't help myself. Then, after I hadn't seen anything but that rag of a jib for years, she lifted a bit an' I saw a boat headin' in here, away off. Just a glimpse, just a second, but it was a good bet, so I come on an' picked up some buoys—an' here I am!"

He emptied his cup and held it out for more. Eve poured it out, and as she put the pot back on the stove-edge, a scratch and whining came from above.

"My dog," she explained. "Be still, Friend!"

This quieted the dog, and when she looked at the man, his eyes, fighting off the fog in them, were on her and he was smiling slightly.

"Funny name for a dog. Friend."

"He's the only one I've got." She smiled, too, but there was no lightness in her voice.

"That so? You deserve a lot of 'em."

His manner was reassuring, and the girl, in whose face had appeared a flash of caution, flushed and looked away.

"An hour ago—out there, thinkin' I'd be all done any minute; an' now—snug, with a nice girl to help me." The dog scratched at the scuttle again. "Must be nice to be your friend—an' follow you round."

That was not boldness—would not have been, Eve was sure, had he possessed all his strength. Her face lighted quickly, but shyness came, and when the man reached for the coffee-pot himself, she turned toward the ladder with something of the same alarm which had come upon her when she heard the men passing her vantage-point on the beach. Then the man looked at her over the cup's rim, and she was struck again by something in his eyes which thrilled her as only the stirring of old and pleasant memories can thrill. Her gaze fell off and deeper color came into her cheeks.

"Goin'?" he asked.

"Yes. It's late and—you're all right."

"To-morrow—say, to-morrow, maybe you'll let me say how obliged I am."

"Perhaps," she said a bit breathlessly, and started up the ladder, impelled to run—not from fright, from stimulus.

Friend pounced on her, and she put him away and turned as the man hailed her again.

"Say, what place is this? Where'd the lake throw me?"

She looked down.

"Why, didn't you know? This is Garden Island."

"Garden Island!" she heard him mutter. "You mean this is—Eldred's harbor?"

"Of course. Ours is the only harbor here."

"And you? Who are you?"

"Why, I'm Eve Eldred."

She loosed her painter, dropped into the yawl and sculled away. To-morrow! He wanted to thank her to-morrow!

THE cup from which the man had been drinking went from his hand. It did not drop. Had it dropped, it would not have broken, for it was very heavy. Instead, it crashed to bits under the stove, clear across the cabin. His breath sucked in audibly and came out again in a sound of disgust.

"Hell! Tossed in here! An' *her* hands help *me*!"

He grimaced, as though the drink the girl had made for him was bitter on his tongue.

THE lighthouse supply-boat, which had attempted to run from St. James back to its station on Squaw Island only to be driven into Indian Harbor by the blow, carried two people, a man and a woman. The man was Ned Borden, keeper of the light, and the woman was his wife, Jenny, who had a rating of second assistant keeper in the service. It was their first trip back to St. James after the opening of the light a month before.

Borden had stood by the motor while they ran across the reef, and the woman, though her hands gripped the spokes of the wheel firmly enough, had seemed less concerned with her course than with what might be revealed once they gained their shelter. She swung the boat in a wide circle for the dock and brought it alongside with a bump and a list, for her eyes had scanned beach and buildings closely as though on the watch for some definite thing at the cost of a handy landing.

Borden entered the house after putting out the lines and eyed the pile of boxes abaft the motor.

"Plenty to eat, shelter from the weather, mail to read—we're as snug as a bug in a—spider's web," he said drolly. His wife was still gazing shoreward. "It's an evil place; but you're not going to worry, are you, Jenny?"

"Worry!" she burst out in a large, gruff voice. "Blistering Moses. It'd take a flock of black devils like this one to make me lose any sleep. I'm just curious about that girl."

Borden took up a lantern.

"She must be a queer one," he said, as he struck a match. "Seems like everybody hates her without any reason, unless just because she's Eldred's daughter. 'Course, there's that story about her and the beacons, and that's— Sounds far-fetched to me; but all the others they tell seem to be moonshine. There's a lot of wickedness in the world for sure, but when people tell stories such as they tell about this girl, I'm always a doubter."

He put the burnt match carefully in his pocket and hung up the lantern, adjusting the wick with squinting eyes.

"At that," he went on, "she may be pretty bad. If there's anything to the story of that man MacKinnon and her hand in it, shows she's pretty hard-hearted for a girl."

"But she was only a baby," protested his wife.

"Sure! That's so. Well, it ain't much matter, Jenny, but in ten years I've never known you to be so curious about anybody." The woman looked at him sharply as he turned away from the lantern, as though to detect some expected and half-feared expression on his face, but it was passive, a gentle face, wide brow, thin lips, steady eyes; strength and tenderness were there at once. He picked up a newspaper and shook out the folds. "I'd say these people were good for just one thing—to let alone."

His wife turned to a window which, with the gloom on one side and the lantern-light on the other, made an imperfect mirror. She straightened her hat, a wide, high-crowned affair of brown straw with one stiff feather stabbing backward.

"I don't see how you ever learned so much as you have, Ned Borden," she boomed. "If your appetite wasn't any bigger'n your curiosity, you'd 've starved to death forty years ago. The only way *I* can find out things is to find out about folks."

'The world would be better off if it knew less about some people," he said, and then, with a tolerant smile, altered his dictum. "Or, the world would be better off if there wasn't so much to *know* about some people."

Jenny grunted in response, and then for a time was busy with the many packages, opening pieces of dress-goods and examining them carefully in the lantern-light, rubbing a thumb critically over the fabric, stretching it, shaking out other pieces.

"Wisht my *Up-to-Date* had come," she muttered once. "Ain't got a rag to my back and don't know no more about what they're going to wear than a bumblebee does about cooking." But with all her evident interest in her purchases, there was a measure of abstraction, as though her mind might be concerned elsewhere, and when some time had passed, she smoothed the skirts of her coat and sighed ponderously and announced, "My underpinning 's all full of cramps; guess I'll go ashore."

Ned looked over the top of his paper.

'Here, Jenny? Don't you want me——"

"Jiminy fish-hooks! I guess I got along on and around and over and through these blasted lakes for forty years without a guardian, and I don't intend starting in to be a weak and leaning stalk now. Stick your blessed nose back into the news of two weeks back Thursday. I'm going to give this corner of hell a look at a righteous woman!"

She lumbered up the steps of the companion-ladder then, while the man watched her go with a twinkle in his eyes. When she had closed the door, he craned his neck to see her walk along the dock toward shore, scanning the beach thoroughly. No one was in sight, and he went back to his paper.

Jenny Borden was a large woman, large of limb and girth and feature, and her walk was normally heavy and measured, but when she stepped from the dock planking to the sand, her movements became somewhat lighter. She awkwardly achieved a degree of stealth.

She passed the shacks where the crew lived and the boarding-house where a cook worked over his stove and went up the path toward the big house, a faint hulk of white in the darkness now. At the steps she paused and scanned the windows. The one light that showed was on Eldred's desk, and she could see him bent forward beside it. She went up to the veranda carefully, walking on the balls of her feet, and, with a good view of the room, scanned it quickly. A fire burned in a great fireplace, and Eldred was alone, writing.

She released the latch so carefully that it made no sound and stepped inside without betraying her presence. Before closing the door, however, she spoke, standing there with a hand gripping the knob.

"Hello, Ed Lasker!"

AT HER words, his pen stopped. Then he turned slowly to look at her.

"Good-evening," he said in his rich, heavy voice. "You are mistaken. My name is Eldred."

At that the woman closed the door ungently and walked toward him, stopping beside his desk, arms akimbo.

"Don't try that with me, Lasker!" Her voice trembled. "Look at me! Do you know who I am?"

She saw light-points leap in his eyes.

"My name is Eldred," he insisted. "As for knowing you——"

"My name is Borden," she interrupted in tart mimicry of his deliberate manner. "Jen Borden, Aunt Jen, 'Red' Jenny Avery that was. *Now* do you know me?"

He nodded.

"Your face, yes"—ironically. "I knew that from the first. Your rashness was confusing. All people who come here know who I am, and you always were—discreet."

"King Norman Eldred!" she scoffed. "Yes; we know each other. There ain't any mistake."

A pause, while she eyed him, breathing rapidly. Then he put down his pen and clasped his white, hair-tufted hands in his lap, sitting back in the chair with a sardonic smile.

"Red Jenny," he said ever so softly, and laughed, lifting his chin a bit. "Red Jenny, with the red gone to silver now—the faded rose, with age dulling its judgment!" The woman stirred and moistened her lips. "Of course, I knew you were on the light—as I know everything."

"Everything?"—contemptuously.

He gave no heed to this, but said:

"I am honored by this call. Won't you sit down?" He rose, with an ironical bow.

"Not under this roof!"

He lowered his head again, this time in mock humility.

"Very well, Red Jenny—Jen Borden—*Mrs.* Borden. How long have you been married to this particular man?"

"He's the first, which you'd 've known if you know everything. Ten years I've been married and in the service, keeping sailors off shoals instead of leading 'em into foul water!"

"Ten years," he repeated musingly. "And ten years of—of peace, Jenny?"

"Peace and happiness, thank God! Ten years with a real man, Lasker, a good man!"

"A good man—a Christian, I understand. You are fortunate. I would have said there were few who could have made you happy—or would have."

Her face worked at the sting of his implication, but she said humbly enough:

"Only that sort would, Lasker. Only that sort, with great hearts and clean minds and the grace to overlook blunders."

Her voice gave a trifle and, in a flash, his eyes, which had only mocked and leered, were prying—prying——

"He *has* overlooked, then?"

"Everything! Do you think I'd hide a thing from a man like that?"

The man's eyes searched her face when her gaze fell, and a smile touched his lips.

"Remarkable!" he said under his breath, and laughed. Then, "And you came here to see me!"

"Don't fool yourself! *You* know why I come here. Five years ago I satisfied myself who King Norman was; for five years I pulled wires and schemed and planned to get us transferred to this district and this light. Not to see you, Lasker—to see—her."

"And do you think you will?" he asked almost slyly, and smiled again.

"*Think* I will? Do I think I will, Lasker? Do you think I *won't*? Oh, you don't know women, Lasker! You don't know what that meant to me, that girl, the first decent thing that come into my life! For twenty years I've felt her baby body in my arms; for twenty years I've heard her saying those first little words; for twenty years I've thought about rocking her at night and picking her up in the morning again. For twenty years my arms have been empty and my heart hungry— And you think I won't see her now, Lasker?"

HE HAD started to turn away, but on that last he whirled savagely.

"Eldred!" he said between clenched teeth. "Eldred for you as well as for the rest of the world, Red Jenny." He advanced menacingly and stopped, poised above her, held the pose a moment and relaxed suddenly. "That much for that!"

Jen Borden laughed then.

"And that's why I'll see her! That's why I'll know her again, 'cause I know more than anybody knows—but you. Oh, you're a devil, Lasker! But you brought something into my life that was sweet and good; you tried to take it away and you did; but you couldn't take the feel of her away, nor make me stop wanting her back." Her voice shook, and she spoke with great difficulty. "That was the thing that made me fit to be the wife of a good man—and it was strong enough to make me work to get near her, where I could see her." She dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief, and the man smiled.

"And your disappointment will pay for your presumption," he said lowly.

The hand holding the handkerchief remained clenched before her chin.

"What do you mean by that?"

"You are dense, Red Jenny. When I took her out of your life, it was final. When I brought her here, it was to keep her for myself—only. When I made myself what men call a king, it was for her—to keep her close, to keep her away from *every*body!"—voice dropping to a stressed whisper. He paused; then: "Can you understand that? You talk about the love of women; you don't know the love of men. You talk about the feel of a child in your arms; you're ignorant—you know nothing of the sight of a child becoming a woman under your eyes, and the walking image of another. Share her? Share her with you? I'd sooner—lose than share her!"

He drew a deep breath, squaring his shoulders, and his eyes, on the woman's frightened face, were wide and evil.

"It is a good thing you came so early. Perhaps we can understand each other. Let it be the last time you come to my island, Red Jenny; let to-night be the last time you ever hope to see Eve. Men here will tell you I'm not to be fooled with, and I will tell you this: She is life to me; she is the object in keeping on. I've risked everything for her, and there's nothing for me to lose in trying to keep her. I will not give her up; I will not share her—not so much as a chance acquaintence!"

"Lasker, you for——"

"Eldred!" he corrected in a shout. "Eldred, for the rest of your life!"

"Eldred be blamed!" Her burst of temper was as hot as his. "You're Lasker for me to my last breath. I don't forget. I've kept my mouth shut, but I don't forget. The people of Port Bruce don't forget, either. Wetherby's alive, and he ain't forgot. That makes you squirm? All I have to do is open my mouth and tell the story and——"

"Then your good Christian husband will know," he broke in.

It was like an unexpected blow. The woman tried to go on and stammered helplessly. She saw his leering mirth and heard his laugh.

"'Ten years of happiness, thank God!'" he quoted. "And now, for another ten, you can thank Norman Eldred!"

"Lask——"

"Eldred!"

"Eldred, then" — weakly. "What are you driving at?"

"At your secret, which you betray so clumsily." He chuckled, toying with a watch-charm fashioned from a Petoskey agate in the shape of a fish. "You never were a good liar, Jenny; you bluster too easily when you try to deceive. You've told him everything, eh?"

"Everything"—in a whisper, catching at the desk corner.

"Told him of *our* little transaction? He had heard and he has forgiven?"

"Of course! Do you think——"

"Let me meet him, then. He might——"

"For God's love, Lasker, not that!"

"Eldred!" he corrected, mockingly. Their gazes clung a moment, his derisive and triumphant, and strength went from the woman's; it wavered, and he made a soft sound that might have been the echo of a laugh. "And when you schemed and pulled wires to get here, he did not know; and now, if he guessed why you are here, what would he say to that?"

She lifted her face to his and studied it with something like awe.

"You're a devil—a black devil," she repeated faintly. "You always could guess what was in folk's minds. I—I'll trade with you, Las—Eldred; I'll keep on keeping my mouth shut. I'll keep our secret, yours and mine. Listen, Eldred; what would 'ave become of Eve if I hadn't loved her first? If it hadn't been for me— Why, I might 'ave had her now with me with nothing to hide. If she's been the one thing in life for you, ain't I got any rights?

"I'll—I'll keep my cowardly tongue between my teeth; I'll say nothing that'll set her to wondering, but I want a part of her, Eldred—just a little part." Tears were in her eyes and voice, and the one hand, holding the ball of handkerchief, was held out in appeal. "It means so much—to an old woman like me. And haven't I helped you? Don't I deserve something for what I done—for giving you the only thing you had to live for?"

Her voice was wretched with heartache, with pleading, and her extended hand trembled, but the man only laughed—low and mockingly.

"I'm not ungrateful. I've told you what she means to me; you've made your claim. Now it is my turn to share, to give something in return——"

"Thank God, Lasker!"

"And I do. Another ten years of silence, which means another ten years of happiness for Red Jenny."

"Oh, you wont do that! You'll let me see her, Lasker! You'll——"

He made a quick gesture of dismissal, and she could see a glint of teeth through his beard.

"No exceptions! She is for me alone. If this blow drops by morning, you leave my harbor; if it holds, you keep to your boat. Do I make myself clear?"

He towered above her, all cruel strength, and the woman let the one hand drop limply to her side. There the red fist clenched and a tremor ran through her bulky body. She lifted her face to speak again, but before words could come a step sounded and Eve came into the room.

SHE stood still, looking first at her father and then at the woman. She saw, at first, only a stranger, and that—finding her there in the house—was startling enough; but it was not this which caused her to check the movement that would have closed the door. It was the expression on the woman's face—tender, gentle, amazed, hungry—yes; hungry—not the hunger for possession but the hunger for service, the hunger to help.

They stood so for a fraction of a moment only, and then Eldred spoke to Jen Borden.

"We understand one another"—stiffly. "It is unfortunate your time has been wasted. Good-evening."

She turned to confront him once more, fresh courage in her heart and words bursting at her lips, but she read in his face such a blazing fury, such a destroying threat that her heart failed and she drew away, frightened and beaten. Eve had stopped in the center of the room, and as the woman moved toward the door she gave one more long look at the girl; then, on the threshold, she turned and flashed at King Norman,

"Some day my cowardly heart 'll find a little starch, and when it does——"

"It will be interesting—very interesting," he broke in, as he turned away.

The woman's chin trembled, more in anger than in broken spirit, but when it seemed as though she were about to speak once more, her breath caught and she turned and went abruptly out. On the veranda, she stood a moment, peering through the glass at the girl who watched her; then she disappeared.

Eldred, again at his desk, stared blankly at the paper on which he had been writing, breath held short as he strained his ears for word or movement from Eve. When she spoke, it was in a low tone of puzzlement.

"Father, who is that woman?"

There was something savage in the abruptness with which he faced her.

"No one you should know!"

His unusual fierceness startled the girl, wiped the questioning look from her eyes, and when he saw this, he softened.

"No one you should know," he repeated less emphatically. "She was called 'Red Jenny' years ago, and was notorious on the lakes. She's the wife of the light-keeper now. She ran a sailor's boarding-house in Buffalo—a hell-hole. She thinks she has a claim against me that I owe her. I have told her not to come near you again."

"Near me? Did she come here to see *me?*"

"You? No"— with a shake of his head and a brief laugh. "But you are here, and she's not fit to walk the same land."

Eve said rather absently,

"And she seemed so—so *motherly!*"

Angry lights flared in his eyes.

"Motherly!" he scoffed. "She's—She's—" It seemed there was no expletive which could convey his contempt. He eyed his daughter angrily and then looked at Friend, who had slipped into the room with his mistress. "Put that dog out!" he said heavily and left the room.

WHEN she was alone in the room, with Friend outside and staring at her through the long glass in the door, Eve drew her outer garments off slowly and stared with abstraction into the blazing logs. Her brows were slightly gathered, and for a moment she stood so, dejected and puzzled, and after that short interval she turned and moved across the room.

It was a big, barren room, with white plaster, uncurtained windows, and the floor was bare except for rag rugs of squaw manufacture. The furniture was of unstained wood and massive in structure. There was one shelf of books above the roll-top desk.

On all the wall-space was but one picture, a framed photograph, and before this the girl stopped, searching the gentle face of the likeness as though pleading for understanding. Seeing the two together, there was no mistaking that this was a photograph of her mother.

For several minutes the girl was there, fingers of one hand plucking at her flannel blouse, looking at the picture. Her breath grew a trifle rapid, and then, reaching out quickly to touch the frame in a mute and futile appeal, she said,

"Mother—*why?*" Just that—and turned away almost guiltily when she heard her father returning.

Throughout the meal which Anna spread on the table in the far end of the room, Eve was conscious of a strange quality in her father. His gaze held on her for long intervals, and in it was something which she did not understand. It made her uneasy, and she tried to avoid it by making talk, which was a difficult matter with Eldred.

The wind shrieked about the building, tearing at cornices, bubbling heavily in the chimney, and at one particularly savage blast, she said:

"No wonder they came in here. No small boat could live in this; could it, father?"

"Unlikely. They were both wise."

"Both? There are three boats in!"

"Three? Gallagher, the supply-boat and——"

"A little schooner. She came in at dusk, and it looked as though there was only one man aboard."

"Hooker, eh? What was her name?"

The girl felt herself flushing.

"It was dark and I couldn't see." She could feel him prying, she thought, and her sense of guilt was high. She was glad that he asked no more and that the meal soon ended.

Eldred went from the table to his desk, but Eve lingered at her place until he said,

"They will be waiting for you at the store."

She rose reluctantly and drew on her jacket.

"Father, if I had to call a night like this, you couldn't hear me."

He went on writing for a moment; then, blotted a page.

"The best way to avoid the necessity of calling is to *know* it never will be necessary." He looked at her and continued, quite gently, "I'd hear you, daughter, across miles of water—any place—any time."

When the girl was out of hearing, Eldred called,

"Anna!" His heavy voice carried through the house and the squaw came hurrying. "Tell Dimmock to come here."

The woman drew a black shawl about her shoulders and went out. Dimmock followed her back and grunted as he entered, china-blue eyes roving the room restlessly. Eldred spoke.

"Dimmock, a hooker made the harbor."

"So? I didn't know."

"Unfortunately, you have only two eyes"—sarcastically. "Use them. Look her over now; if she's all right, send the master here."

A HALF-HOUR later, another step was on the veranda and knuckles rapped at the door. Eldred, over his desk, did not move, but said heavily,

"Come!"

He did not look up as the other entered, but when he had walked to the middle of the room and was apparently hesitating, Eldred turned, and his black eyes ran the length of the trader's figure, coming to a stop at the face. It was red and puffed from the abuse of weather, but the gaze that met his was steady and—hostile. That last quality was the one which nipped Eldred's attention first; he studied those eyes and drew a cautious breath of covered surprise. For an instant there was about him bafflement and dismay; but those passed, and his looked settled to composure and met the hostility of the other with a growing mockery.

"Sit down."

"I'll stand."

For the second time in a few hours, that small hospitality had been refused.

"Your own choice. You've a trading hooker?"

"The *Annabelle*."

In their voices was enmity, a sparring, as though neither gave words to his uppermost thoughts. Eldred's tongue-tip roved his lips and he was very alert, now. The other waited, watching closely.

"My man Dimmock said something to you about my needing a hooker?"

"That's why I'm here."

No truth in that! Nor was it intended for truth; it rang with ironic evasion, but Eldred appeared not to detect this. He said:

"I have three or four weeks' work for a hooker—box lumber from Pine Lake, some supplies from Charlevoix, perhaps carrying a few fish. My boats are busy. I've been on the watch for some one; maybe your boat will do."

"Maybe. I go with the boat."

That was a taunt, but again Eldred gave no heed. He spoke briefly of distances and rates, outlining his plan. The other made but few comments and then with only a word or two, and his manner suggested that, while he was immensely interested in talking to Norman Eldred, he cared not one fig for the discussion of work. So with Eldred as well. But, finally,

"Well, what do you say?"—rising.

"I'll say this first, King Norman: I don't like to deal with you."

"Ah, yes"—in relief, as though glad that something honest had been said, and he lowered his head slightly in that mock humility. "Yes; stories are told. I suppose every trader knows them."

"Stories! So *I* need stories, Eldred?" the man flashed, and King Norman spread his feet as if to steady himself to a blow. "Do *I* need to listen to others?" He approached, thrusting his face close. "No; I don't have to tell you who *I* am!" Eldred stared back at him for the space of a slow breath, and then gave his head the slightest shake of negation. "That's truth, anyhow. You knew when you first looked at me. Did you think a ghost had come to haunt you?"

"You are rash. Your attitude will not help to an amiable understanding."

"Rash?" He relaxed and laughed. "Amiable understandin'? Who asked for it, Eldred? Plain understandin' suits me, an' that's what we've got. You called me up here to make your offer. Eldred, tell me this: Do you want the *Annabelle* so badly now that you know her master?"

Eldred's red lips stirred, showing a gleam of white teeth.

"Knowing her master, and having him come this way, defiant and prejudiced, makes me want his hooker twice as badly." The trader sniffed. "But you have mentioned stories; you have listened to them, and perhaps that is as well. Things *have* happened to men who come here as you have come—insolently, looking for trouble. For your own good, now that you've brought up the matter, it might be wiser for you to go, at least until you can come back—with an open mind."

The trader laughed again, quite easily this time, with some of the bitterness gone from his gray-brown eyes.

"I didn't plan to come here—I never did. The lake threw me in, an' if your threats scared me, I'd have to stay now. You don't want me because I'm who I am, an' so I've *got* to stay. You think I'm a fool an' lookin' for trouble. That so? Yes; I thought so. Now, I've got this to say to you: Be careful, King Norman; be damned awful careful!"

He emphasized his last words by a leveled finger, and not until the hand had sunk slowly to his side did Eldred reply.

"Good! We quite understand one another, which makes everything simple and easy. Day after to-morrow, probably, you can start. Until then——"

For another moment they faced one another, but without speaking, and then the trader turned and walked deliberately out, without looking back. As the door closed, he began whistling a light, gay, happy little tune. After a lengthy interval, Eldred sat down and rubbed a palm slowly along the chair-arm.

"An ill wind—" he began, but did not finish, because his voice choked as if with anger.

THE logs were embers. Eldred was still in his chair before the hearth, huge legs sprawled toward the fire, hands crossed on his stomach, eyes vacant. He was alone and lonely, as kings are said sometimes to be. Outside his house were shadows—moving shadows—and in his heart was anger which, in the beginning, had been apprehension. He would not fear; he would rage—at misgiving and at shadows.

There were shadows enough in the life of Norman Eldred, but never before had it been necessary for him to summon rage to drive them down. Two had come back to him that night—the one had been easy to brush away, but the other— It was a new thing, and a strange thing, to find a man who challenged him—a new and strange thing to be challenged by a shadow!

The tumult of the storm was yet unabated. The forest rocked and the house trembled before the weather. And then, above it all, came another sound, a throaty cry, wavering, then rising shrilly, long-drawn, high in pitch, ringing through the house. It stopped Eldred's heart and sent him to his feet.

"Father!" came the word, and again: "Father! Father!"

Then the sound of bare feet on the stairs, a door opened, and Eve, clad in her simple nightgown, burst into the room, eyes wide and bewildered. Red spots were on her cheeks, and she stopped, clinging to the door, breathing quickly.

"Eve! What is——"

His hands closed on her firm arms, and she lifted her frightened gaze to his face. A shudder ran through her slender body, and she moved her arms as though to free them from his touch.

"A dream, father!"

"Dream?"—with a laugh of relief. "It can upset you so?"

Her breath caught sharply.

"But this one! It was more like remembering; I was only half asleep. It seemed—it was so—" Her voice dropped to a whisper.

"Tell it to me." His voice betrayed alarm.

"I—I saw mother," she said, words widely spaced, "and she was in trouble. And you weren't there, father. Another man, but not you. And that woman, the one who was here to-day—I saw her. They were all together and all so troubled—Father!"

She drew away from him, a palm at her breast, for at mention of her mother he had stiffened; one hand had sought his side and clutched the flesh as though burning pain were there.

"Only a dream," he said dryly, relaxing.

"But it was so awful! Unhappiness all about, like fog."

Her eyes were clearer now. They left off their staring at his face, and that broke his tension.

"It's all right, daughter. You tumble down here half asleep, a nightmare befuddling you, and frighten your father."

"I didn't mean— You are the only one I have to go to."

He stepped close and put his arms about her with a long sigh. He could not see that her face against his breast was fired with a look that was almost revulsion, did not know that her palms against his shoulders were impelled to push and break that unwelcome embrace, did not detect the tremor that ran through her body as he stroked her sleek, warm back.

"The only one you have," he said, lifting his chin as though in a boast. "Yes; the only one— Good-night, now. Go back to sleep."

His lips touched her hair. She slipped from him with a murmur and went silently toward the stairway, giving, somehow, the impression that she would like to run.

After she had gone, Eldred stood staring at the door a long moment; then he braced his shoulders with a swagger and turned to face that framed photograph on the far wall. It was, at that distance and in the low light, only a blank rectangle, but his eyes held steady, and into them came a positive leer.

"But she *comes* to me," he muttered. "She comes—to *me!*"

DOWN in the light-house supply-boat, Ned Borden lifted his head from the cushion where it lay and listened.

"Jen?" he asked softly. "Jenny?"

"Well?"

"You don't sleep."

"What a fine observer you are!"

"Count sheep," he advised.

"Sheep be blistered! I wish to high heaven I had my machine here!"

That ended their talk, but twice more Ned Borden lifted his head to stare in the direction of his wife, and for long lay awake himself, wondering.

Outside one of the shacks, Eldred stood talking cautiously to Dimmock. He had come to his man instead of sending for him, an unusual happening. He turned to go.

"I saw the look," mumbled Dimmock. "I thought it was him."

Eldred halted.

"Two of us know—you and I. That is enough. If the men guess and the story starts, stop it! Bad enough to have it spread round the other islands, as it will. For Eve—it's as forbidden as—other happenings."

"Aye. I know."

The gale was gone with morning. There had been stirrings aboard the boats that had taken refuge in the harbor long before dawn. Gam Gallagher, who had worked late on his crippled motor, called in Ned Borden for help, and the sound of metal striking metal came early from the *Kittiwake.* The keeper's wife appeared on her boat, shaking out the skirt of her suit with petulant mutterings for the wrinkles.

The trader had been busy on the deck of his hooker since the stars faded, and as Jen Borden watched, he slung a line between the spars and hung a half-dozen freshly washed garments to dangle limply in the early sunlight.

"A man's heart," she said to herself, "is only as clean as his shirt. That boy's got the cleanest heart on the Great Lakes."

She told that to him a half-hour later—rowed over herself and stopped and talked while the master was bending new canvas to replace that which had blown away. When she paid her compliment, he grinned and bobbed his head.

"She's a lady, too," Jen said, indicating the graceful little schooner.

"That's why," he said, and she knew that he meant the washing, that he respected his ship and had a love for her and would keep her trim and match her faultless condition with his own. The woman's eyes warmed, and they talked at length. Ned finally hailed his wife, but before she dipped her oars, she said,

"You know what you're doing, dearie?" He nodded. "You've heard the stories about him?"

"All"—rather bitterly.

"And they tell me that none deals with him that don't come out the little end of the horn."

'They tell me that, too."

The concern in her eyes deepened.

'You mean you've *got* to trade with him? He's got you owing him something?"

"That's it. I owe him somethin', an' I've been too long gettin' here to pay my debt now!"

"Well, nobody can say you're going into this here spider's web with your eyes shut. But be careful of him, boy." She looked shoreward and spun her dingy round. 'And be careful of that girl, dearie!" But this last was no warning; it was more like supplication, and the man looked sharply. But Jen Borden was pulling away with short, sharp strokes, scanning the buildings on shore, an unmistakable misgiving in her face.

Before he pulled out of the harbor, Gam Gallagher went aboard the hooker and talked. The master of the *Annabelle* was amiable, he found, and the Irishman lingered for the better part of an hour. Among other things, he learned that the trader had arranged to work for Eldred, and after that statement had been made, a considerable silence followed.

"I s'pose you know about him," Gam said finally, and the other laughed, which put a look of concern in the older man's eyes. "He ain't to be monkeyed with, for no reason. We've all learned that. There was Olaf Erickson, from Harbor Springs; he tried to stand up for his rights an' Eldred rammed him with his steam tug an' sunk Olaf's boat in forty fathom, an' when they had him up, his crew lied him out of it. There was an Injun poacher, too, who speared out of Eldred's pound-nets, an' what happened to him was a-plenty. He couldn't walk for over a month, an' his body's twisted to this day. That's what he does to them that crosses him, an' it's little better if you try to deal with him in business. He'll stop at nothin' when it's to his advantage. Why, there was Jode MacKinnon, as fine a man as ever stood at a wheel, an' Eldred——"

"I know. I've heard the stories." Until then, the trader had listened with good humor, but this interruption was brusk.

Gam scratched his gray beard.

"Well, then you know what to look for," he said, watching the lad's face curiously, as if trying to remember where he had seen it before. "There's just one other thing"—as he put a foot over the rail—"it's that gel."

The trader looked up quickly. Did all people insist on warning him against Eve Eldred?

"She's the apple of his eye, an' them that let theirs rest on her handsome ones too long—it's worse than tamperin' with his nets."

"No worry, my friend, about that," said the other, so strangely that Gallagher remembered the tone and wondered long after he had left the harbor behind.

PART of Eldred's fleet went out to lift that morning; the balance of the crew was busy on shore, and King Norman himself stood directing the erection of a tar-pot when a man emerged from the fringe of trees, an ax over his shoulder. He was big, as tall as Eldred, though not so massively built, swarthy of face and with a black mustache.

"Finished, Mosseau?"

"*Oui*. Twenty stakes more. An' dat iss all now, eh, Eldret?" A pause. "You won' wan' Jean Mosseau longair, eh?"

In that question was a tinge of eagerness which was also reflected in his eyes; but that died when Eldred replied:

"Another set of stakes yet. Anyhow, you will stay on."

The man put down his ax rather dejectedly.

"Why for you wan' me, Eldret? Me, I wan' for to go away. I haf work laak hell for you two, t'ree year, now, an' p'raps, Keeng Norman, it be bettair for you to let me go now."

"Possibly it would be better for one of us if I should let you go. No matter—you are going to stay."

Dark color swept into the Frenchman's face.

"Py damn, Eldret; you maak wan fool from me, eh? You play wan minute too long wit' Jean Mosseau! Me, I am——"

"Wanted in Ottawa," broke in Eldred, with a half-laugh. "And you cannot get to the mainland before I can. They'll be waiting for you, Mosseau."

The flush drained from the other's face and he stood a moment as if he would resume argument or plea, but Eldred walked away, giving directions to another man, and Mosseau turned toward the woods.

A dozen paces, and he halted to look back. He hated Eldred very much, it was evident, but fear was more pronounced than his hate.

HE TOOK the road that led down the island to where he had been felling saplings for pound-net stakes and muttered to himself now and then as he walked, shaking his head from time to time. The character of the forest changed; he entered a finger of swamp where the road was damp and brown water stood on either side. Rounding an abrupt bend, he came face to face with Eve Eldred and her dog. The girl stopped short at sight of him and then, with a curious resolution coming to mingle with her surprise, started to pass on. The man dropped the ax from his shoulder.

"Mees Eve, wait wan minute."

The girl stopped, for he was squarely in the middle of the way.

"What do you want, Jean Mosseau?"

"Do not back up"—when she moved as if to retreat. "Do you not know what it iss I wan', Mees Eve? Mus' I tell you wit' my voice, laak I tell you wit' my eyes, eh? Haf you not seen all wintair what it iss I mus' say to you?"

"I don't know what you mean. You better not stop me. My father——"

"Ah. Your fadair! It is heem who maak me spick. He will not let me go away from you who tormen' me!"

That astonished Eve, halting the growth of her fright.

"Torment you?"

"Tormen' as no man has efer been tormen'. I haf try to keep my voice still, but I cannot—no longair. It iss my 'eart which maak my voice spick; my 'eart, which has lost its pride an' iss 'urt an humble—because of you!"

"Because of me? What are you talking about?"

"About my 'eart, which has no pride. When Jean come here, his 'eart haf pride; when he look at your face"—a shrug—"his pride she begin to go, laak snow in April. When he stay here wan year, hees pride she iss all crowd' out. When lofe she come to a man, dere iss no longair room for pride."

A deep flush came into the girl's face; her blue eyes flashed angrily.

"My father—" she began sharply, but the man interrupted.

"I know; I know your fadair. I ask heem many taam to let Jean go away, but he say, 'No.' He bring me here when I come from Canada by St. Ignace; he hear me tell my frien' in a saloon when I drink too moch dat Canada she wan' Jean for to put heem in jail, mabbe. Jean she iss glat to come here wit' your fadair, den; dis islan' she wan fine place to hide, eh? *Oui;* wan fine place for to hide ontil a man's 'eart—" He laughed and stuck his ax in a stump. "Jail she iss wan bad place, an' Jean Mosseau she don' laak jail, but Garden Islan' she iss wan bad place for me, too. When firs' I look into your mos' beautiful eyes, *ma'mselle*, when firs' I see your most lofely lip—ah, I t'ink per'aps dere be bettair place dan heafen an', mabbe, worse place dan jail.

"I haf know how you keep away from men, laak wan queen, *ma'mselle*"—nodding, with a sly smile showing in his face. "I haf watch; I haf leesten, an' I haf know. You maak men t'ink you fierce laak wan wil'cat, eh? You haf maak dem afrait you scratch an' bite an' tear, yes. But Jean she know"—tapping his breast. "Jean she know at 'eart you are laak wan sweet flower, eh? So gentle, so sof', so easy to—crush, eh?" He waited, head nodding lightly and eyes narrowed as he read in her changing face that he had guessed the truth. "I know dese t'ing, an' I haf wan' to go away because Jean's 'eart she what you call fain'. She don't hope moch; she jus' suffair.

"To-day, I ask wan taam more to go away, an' your fadair he say, 'No.' I can't go onless I go to jail. I don't care for jail now, Mees Eve; my 'eart she spick! I can no longair keep heem still. My 'eart she don' wan' for to hurt wan small flower; my 'eart she bow. See! I ben' my knee—so; I bow my 'ead—so. I ask you, *ma'mselle*, what Jean Mosseau she can do to maak lofe come into your eye when he look into your lofely face, to maak wan smile come to your mos' beautiful lip—*Mees* Eve!"

At the beginning of this recital, the girl had been caught by cold fear, for behind the gentle pleading of the Frenchman was steely resolution, thinly cloaked. He had guessed that she had feared him while she appeared to be indifferent, and that had set her in a panic, but, on the heels of that revelation, his voice had become gentle, broken, and now, as he bent his knee before her, as he lowered his head, as he spread his hands in a graceful gesture of courtliness given to him, perhaps, by some forgotten ancestor of the old empire, she felt her courage rising above the fear. She stepped forward quickly.

"Jean Mosseau, you're a fool!"

His head flashed upward, and she saw a glint of teeth as his lip drew back; and then—of course there was nothing else to do. Her small palm caught him a stinging crack on the cheek, and she brushed past him, running up the road swiftly, breath quick and legs unwieldy as they are in dreams.

She did not slacken her pace until her heart's leaping was fit to choke her. She walked on then, a hand at her heaving breast, looking backward frequently.

"Oh, Friend, but *that* was a scare!" she said finally, eying the palm that had struck the blow. "And he *knows* I'm afraid, and it'd do no good to slap him—another time!"

Mosseau, surprised by Eve's action, did not attempt pursuit. He rose slowly from his knees and retrieved his ax with an angry wrench. Then he listened for sounds of the fleeing girl.

"All righ'," he said, with a nod. "All righ', Mees Eve. All righ', Keeng Norman! Jean she stay here, eh? All righ'—all righ'——"

He did not stop at the slashing which had been his destination. He came back to it later, but not until he had gone far through the forest and come out on the beach to the rude domicile of a breed. There was talk with the man, and argument and threat; and then they went inside and dug in a barrel of flour and brought out a jug. From the jug the Indian poured a bottle of liquid, and this Jean Mosseau carried back with him.

ELDRED'S store resembled more the van of a lumber camp than any other establishment. Although the scattered Indian farmers and fishermen from further down the island made their purchases there, it was maintained primarily for the men of the fishing crew, not for their convenience but for Eldred's profit. And perhaps there was a deeper motive behind the establishment of that store, because, as has been recorded earlier in this narrative, it was here that Eve was forced to face those men.

It was a small place, with a counter along one side, heated by a large box stove and lighted by one swinging lamp suspended squarely in the center of the ceiling. Usually it was open only at evening and served as a gathering-place for the crew. It was their club and, to a constrained extent, their forum. Also, it was the place which afforded opportunity for their eyes to rest naturally on the one piece of loveliness which daily moved among them, a privilege which, at other times, was tacitly forbidden.

They would sit about the stove in cold weather, on the steps in fair, and yarn and expound and argue, while behind the counter the girl stood, outwardly indifferent to them, outwardly cool and collected, outwardly contemptuous and with something like her father's detached assurance. Those things the men saw and, knowing that she was backed by Eldred's strength, none seemed curious to look further. A more careful observer, however—such as Mosseau had been—could have seen indications of misgiving. Eve was always stimulated there, keyed to a point of maintaining her show of superiority, and this forcing of a manner which her heart did not share was evidenced in an uneven poise, a curtness when curtness was not necessary, a uniform coldness which she used when dealing with the most presumptuous of the men and with the weakest alike. Her conduct never harmonized with her lips and her eyes and the gentle timbre of her voice.

To-night, it was more of an ordeal than usual for her because, from the beginning, Mosseau was there, apart from the group about the stove, leaning against a barrel, cap shading the eyes which followed her every move and which, she now knew, detected the sham. He had been like that many nights before, staring at her when she stood, between customers, back against the shelves, arms folded, waiting with her show of counterfeit composure. But today he had pleaded love and, beneath his urging, had displayed a knowledge of her and a desire which had shaken her thoroughly; and to-night there was a new and alarming glitter in his eyes.

For many minutes no newcomer had entered, and those who were there showed no inclination to buy further. Eve drew the strings tight on the leather purse which served as a till, and moved as though to pass from behind the counter and lower the light, signal for the men to disperse. Then it was that the Frenchman hitched at his belt and swaggered across the floor. The girl stopped, hand on the counter, pulse in quickened measure.

"Mees Eve, I need wan pipe." He stopped. His voice had been a trifle loud, and the steadiness of his gaze was confusing. None other, though, but Eve seemed to notice.

He selected a pipe and asked for tobacco.

"Is that all?" the girl asked as he threw down a bill.

He chuckled.

"All from de shelf, Mees Eve." He placed both hands on the counter and leaned close, so close that she caught the whiff of whisky on his breath. It stopped her heart. "All Jean wan' to buy, yes; but two t'ing he wan' yet from Mees Eve." He held up two extended fingers. "Two t'ing,"—shaking the hand close to her face—"firs', she iss wan smile from your mos' beautiful eye; de odder, she is wan kees from——"

"That'll do!"

The girl's frightened word cut short the talk round the stove. She stood very straight, but her knees shook.

"That will do!" she repeated. "Here is your change."

The silver jingled on the counter, but Mosseau did not so much as look at it.

"No; dat won' do. To-day your pretty feet stamp on de 'eart of Jean Mosseau. Jean she go away from here might' queek now, but he do not go onless he taak wan smile, wan kees to remembair wan mos' beautiful yo'ng woman."

"My father——"

"Your fadair, *pah!*" He spat to show contempt. "Jean not afrait from no man! You call out; your fadair come. But before he come, wan smile been maak my heart joomp; wan kees she has——"

His hand whipped across the counter and grasped her wrist. A cry of appeal broke from her lips as she turned her face sharply toward those who watched, but she read there only excitement, amazement. A great helplessness settled down on her.

Mosseau grinned, leaning lower, imprisoning both her wrists in one hand. His free arm swept about her waist, and she felt herself lifted and dragged rudely across the counter.

They swung half round beneath the lamp, the girl struggling fiercely in a grip that would not yield. For a moment she was like a trapped animal with strength and vigor and murder in her face, but he pinned her arms and drew her close, breathing hard. She tipped her head backward and tried to scream, but the effort brought only a gasp.

"So?" she heard him jeer. "So you t'ink you can get away from Jean Mosseau after he *beg*, eh?"

One of his hands went behind her head, forcing her face upward until their lips were not separated by the length of a finger.

"Don't!" she gasped, fight gone from her. "Let me——"

"Ah, now *ma'mselle* she beg, eh?"

He ended with a growl, deep in his throat, and it seemed to Eve that her racing heart would burst with shame and fright. Blood crowded into her ears; she felt him talking further but could distinguish no word, could not even hear the new, quick step on the floor.

"Let her go!"

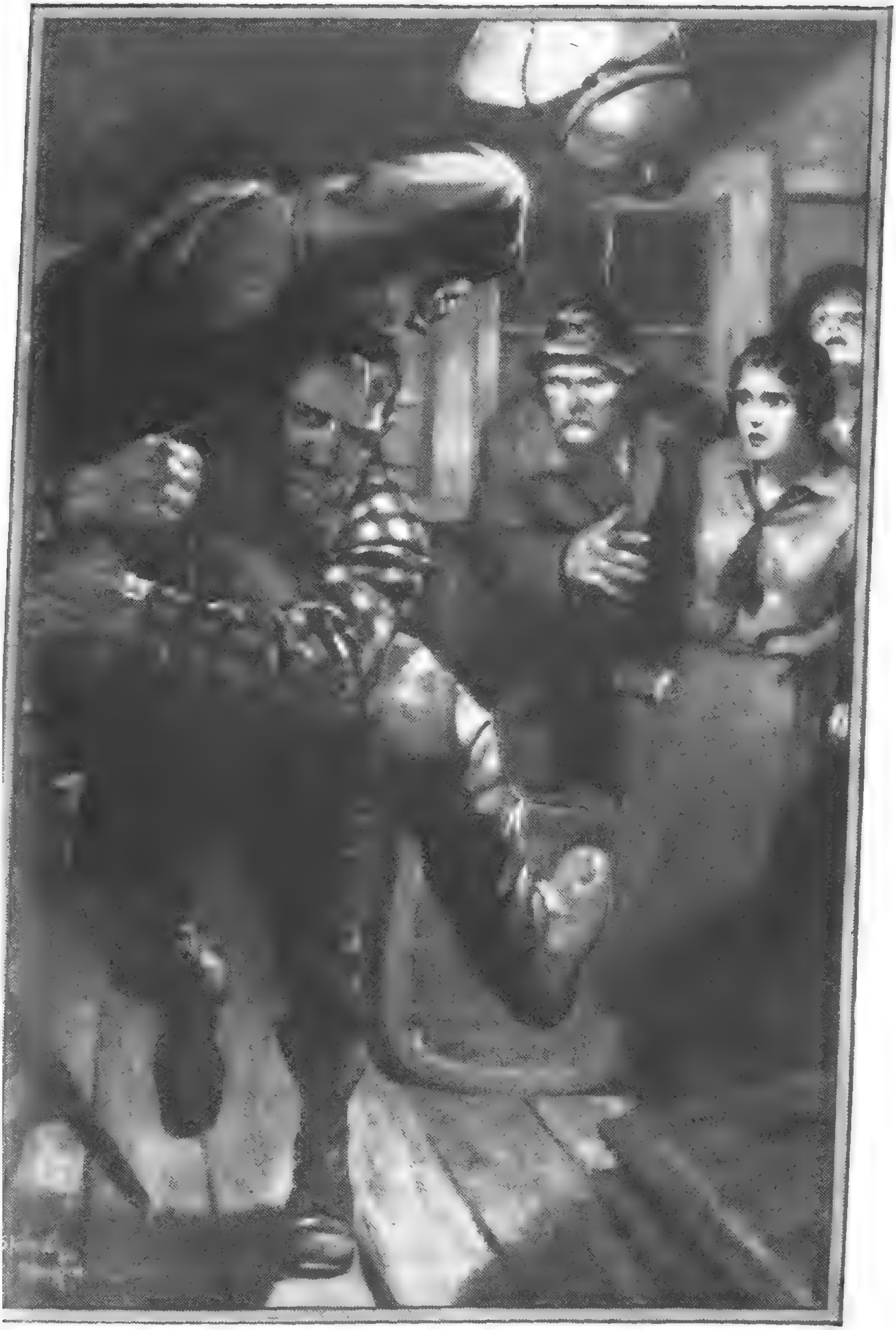
But those three words, spoken evenly, struck like blows on her consciousness. The trader was standing there beside them, his gray-brown eyes glowing. Mosseau turned sharply, to eye this intruder.

"Ho! You wan' for me to let'er go, eh? All righ', when I taak what I wan'!"

His lips dropped for their prize. In a split instant he would have made good his purpose, but as his mustache brushed the lightest strands of Eve's hair, a stinging crack met his head, driving it sideways with a snap.

EVE found herself free and backed against the counter, watching the Frenchman crouch and with a roar rush for the trader. Blows had been struck; Mosseau had been knocked down. She saw the trader's arms drive out like metal rods, heard the crunch of hard knuckles meeting the charging skull. The group about the stove fell away, giving more room.

She caught a flash of Mosseau's face, white—white, with dark blood flowing across it. She saw his catlike crouch again, saw him rush once more and wind



Eve saw Mosseau rush once more and wind his arms about the other's thighs and sweep him back and upward against the wall with a sickening crash.

his arms about the other's thighs and sweep him back and upward against the wall with a sickening crash. They went down together, Mosseau on top, but a knee doubled and drove into the pit of his stomach, flinging his body clear, flung it at Eve's feet, where he lay a moment, retching for breath.

The stranger waited across the room, making no move to carry the fight. His eyes glowed, and about his mouth was a twitching, as though he were ready to smile. Eve wanted to run, but could not move; she strained back against the counter in effort to be away from the cursing figure at her feet which struggled to its knees. A flash like cold fire swept beneath her eyes as the Frenchman's knife came out, naked and ready. The watchers surged into the corners with a staccato'd stamping. Some one shouted a warning—and Eve realized that it had been her voice.

The knife hand whipped back; the blade poised almost beneath her chin; the arm swept forward in a quick arc—and a chair, gathered with a backward sweep of the trader's big hand, met and turned it and flew on, crashing into Mosseau's chest.

And before Jean could recover his balance, the other was on him, aggressive, merciless, his blows sounding like a thick stick beating meat until the other man sagged and wilted, a battered hulk on the floor.

The trader stopped then abruptly. He stood up and looked down, then stooped, fastened his fingers in the Frenchman's collar and jerked him to his feet.

"You get out, now!" he said, without much anger.

He propelled the man to the doorway and, outside, with Mosseau standing on the top step, let him go. He fell, cursing, into the dirt.

There was a stirring in the group that had watched; it stopped when Eve stepped impulsively forward to meet the trader, who was reentering. Her eyes were burning, as her heart burned with this new possession—this incredible pride at having found a champion. One hand was lifted in a gesture that could have but one meaning—glad gratitude.

"I hope," the man said, halting very close to her and looking into her face with a slight frown, "that you aren't goin' to thank me."

"Thank you," she said lowly, and laughed nervously. "Of course I am!"

"Don't!" he cut in dryly. "I didn't like to see the frog get away with it. You, though—I guess you had it comin'. I came in for some tobacco"—passing on to the counter.

Minutes later, Eve found herself alone. The men were gone; a coin lay where he had dropped it. She was conscious of only two things—the fire in her cheeks and the lead in her heart.

EVE ELDRED went slowly up the path. Minutes before, when in physical need, there had been a name to call—her father's. Now, with a need greater if not so spectacular, there was no name to call and but one place to go. She started as soon as the first bewilderment left her and, entering the house, stood there with shoulders drooping, a hand against the wall, staring mutely at her mother's photograph.

She looked younger than ever, and her slenderness seemed frailty. Her gaze held on the sweet face behind the glass with a dull hopelessness, as if there were no way to be rid of the trouble which weighed so heavily on her now. After a time she sighed unsteadily and said flatly,

"I deserved it, he said——"

Just that aloud; and the words went round and round the limited cycle of her thought, unchanging and unbroken, until her father entered.

"You're all right?" he asked sharply, walking quickly to her.

"I'm not hurt."

He put one hand on her shoulder and cupped her chin with the other.

"I didn't figure on whisky; without it, he'd not have had the courage. I'm going to find him now, and—make him pay."

The girl drew away from his lips in her hair, but he did not notice. Sounds of his departure died, and Eve moved to a window from where she could see the light she had left in the store, the lights from the shacks—where the men had reassembled to talk and to gloat over her double humiliation, likely. And another light—the bright riding-light of the hooker lying against the dock.

She did not think more of her father or his errand. The fright that Mosseau had set in her heart was gone. She did not care what happened to him. She was concerned with this question: Why could a man fight like that for her and then tread upon her grateful heart?

Over and over again that question shaped itself in her mind, bewildering and shaming her. In the beginning, that was all that it did—bewildered and shamed—and then, as her excitement wore down, she tried to answer the query for herself. Last night, when she went aboard his schooner to help him, he had seemed fine and kind; she had brought ashore with her a warming secret, the first truly delightful experience in months. She had let herself dream of him throughout this day. To-night, the thing which she had feared would come had happened. She had been in danger from a man, with her father beyond call. Before to-night there had been no other to defend her but her father; having another was a luxury of which she had had little hope, indeed. And then this trader had come, and the shock which the Frenchman had given her was wiped out in a breath by the realization that she had a friend.

This was too valuable a thing to relinquish without a struggle. He had scorned her thanks; he had said the thing which no friend would have said, and yet he had *done* the friendly thing. That much was hers—that much he could not take away. He had been her champion, her first champion, and now, as she stood alone in that large room trying to think it all out calmly, she discovered that she was peculiarly miserly of that experience. She wanted to keep fresh the thrill which he had given her, wanted to keep it unblemished, wanted this so much that she found herself growing half indignant that any man—even the trader—should rob her of the gift which he had bestowed. She had wanted friendship so badly! She had waited for it so long. And now a man would fight for her, but would scorn her while he fought.

Why? If there was a reason for it, she had a right to know, had she not? There was no justice in it—no justice——

She heard herself say, "I've a right to know," and with the spoken words her spirit gained strength. Her voice had been unsteady, and now she compressed her lips to keep them from trembling. It was enough to be rebuked like that, too much to let it go without understanding why.

She pondered over that, again and again and then said, half aloud,

"I've a right—" She moved to the door and stood a moment, and then she said it again. She turned the knob and hesitated; finally, with a gesture of resolution, she slipped out and ran down the steps and into the path to the dock.

ON THE *Annabelle's* rail she poised as lightly as a gull settles on a net-stake. No sound. She went softly to the scuttle. It was open, a light burning down there with the smell of pipe-smoke coming up; she parted her lips to hail him as she had hailed last night when he lay exhausted below, but now her voice failed and a panic of shyness swept over her. Resolution was shattered; she did not know what to say should he come. Confronting him was, suddenly, an ordeal, and she turned for flight.

"Who's there?"

His muffled exclamation froze her, and she crouched in the shadow of the cabin, heart lurching in unsteady measure. Silence, followed by his feet on the companion. She had wasted the golden moment; she could have been gone by now had she kept on, but he was there, above her in the moonlight, and she strove to retrieve that escape which she most wanted, but she was not quick enough. His hand caught her wrist as the Frenchman's had caught it; her flight was arrested; she was pulled back none too gently, and stood on the deck facing him, her free hand against her breast.

"So? You pay a visit an' change your mind!"

"Yes. Let me go, please. I *have* changed my mind."

He laughed.

"Scared at bein' caught, eh? There's no need of it, though, unless it's your guilty conscience— Or haven't you got one—a conscience?"

His bitterness stung her, and when she looked into his darkened face, she tried again to break free.

"Please let me go!"

"Fair enough—if you'll tell me why you sneaked aboard."

"It was nothing. I—I came to ask a question; then I—I decided not to. Please!"

He studied her face a moment and then let go her wrist.

"They say that's a woman's right," he said sarcastically. "It's higher, I expect, than an owner's right to know who prowls round his boat after dark."

THE irony in tone and manner started a warmth flooding through the girl; that was her pride stirring—when she had thought it dead! He believed she had something to hide, and she had nothing—except that bruise on her pride.

"No; we've both got some rights," she said more steadily. "It's your right to know why I came aboard, I guess. I—I'm—I came here to ask you why you said that I deserved a thing like that—like would have happened if you hadn't been here to-night."

Aside from the slight tremor in her voice, she did not betray her excitement. The moon lighted her face, and the trader looked into it with a queer expression.

"Do you know my name?"

She shook her head, wondering at this irrelevancy.

"Perhaps that will explain everything, then. My name is MacKinnon."

Her lips formed a silent "Oh!" and she half lifted one hand in a gesture of surprise.

"MacKinnon? Oh, I should have known that! You were something to him? To Jode? You look like him round the eyes." Her face brightened and her voice was glad excitement. The trader, however, only said, with no response to her mood,

"He was my father."

Eve's breath caught.

"*You* are his boy! You were the one he—David? That is your name?" He made no reply; his eyes were burning as they searched her face. "Why, I thought I—I—" She faltered at his forbidding silence, and confusion came over her. "But you said that explained everything! I don't even know what you mean."

"Don't know?" he burst out savagely. "You don't remember what happened to my father here?"

"Oh, yes"—very lowly, and nodding. "I remember that. I walked the beach for days, thinking he might come back—all right. I cried every night for so long. He was my only friend; he used to take me on the lake with him sometimes, and he talked to me in the evenings and told me about you—and your sister."

"What did he tell you about her?"

"Why, that she was about my age, and that she was sick. She'd fallen—hadn't she?—and hurt her back."

"You remember that all right!"—bitterly. "That's why he came over here. Because the run wasn't good in Green Bay, an' he had to have money so he could get her to a big doctor in Chicago. Luck was good here, in the beginnin'; you were on the island, livin' in the house he'd built years before, an' he let you alone an' lived aboard his boat with his helper. Your father's luck wasn't much good, I guess, an' maybe that made him jealous. It was good enough when he started liftin' our nets; it made the beginnin' of his—kingdom. What do you remember about beacons?"

"They fixed some," she replied. "Jode used to be out late, and sometimes we were, too. The reef was always bad, so they fixed the beacons so that a boat holding on them would have enough water."

He said something under his breath, and his eyes, fast on hers, glowed in a sudden burst of rage.

"But he went on, after all, didn't he? He didn't have any trouble gettin' in before they were placed, did he? But the first night that she blew hard from the s'thwest an' he trusted to those beacons, he went on the rocks, didn't he? And his helper got ashore by the grace of God, but my father——"

"Oh, I know! We looked and looked, and I stood down there in the rain and called to him. I remember it so!"

Her voice was pregnant with sorrow, and the man gave an audible whiff of breath.

"It didn't kill my father only. My sister went out a little while afterward. The money he'd have made in those few weeks would have saved her likely. An' the next winter my mother died. They said it was a broken heart. An' we never even got the nets that had fished so well. Your father claimed he'd bought——"

The girl's gesture was but the lift and fall of a hand, but in it was such sincere pain and sympathy that few could have doubted the shock his story gave her.

"Say; are you actin'?" he burst out, but her blank stare dulled the bite of his question. "Don't you see now why all I can hope for you folks here is harm?"

"Harm?" The word came timidly, and she dropped one hand into the other.

"Don't you know that he went on the reef because the beacons were changed—that my father was murdered here?"

"Changed?" she cried, and her eyes held on his without a flicker.

"Changed! His helper knew that, because he was wheelin', an' my father stood right behind him, an' Fred—that was the helper—got to the mainland as fast as he could and as far away from your father as he could go, I guess. He told the story, an' I know, an' a hundred men know, that with weather like that an' true lights to go by, my father 'd never gone on; he was too good a sailor. What Eldred threatened Fred with nobody knows, but he went through St. James an' Charlevoix scared stiff, an' he wasn't a coward. You see, I know all this, so don't try to make me think you don't. Don't try to lie to me!"

She drew back from his fierceness, lifting her clasped hands; they were small, ivory-white in the moonlight, and the man looked at them closely.

"Lie? Why should I lie to you, David?"

Her voice retained that genuine quality, and he moved uneasily, but his gaze went back to her hands.

"The story has it that your hands changed the lights that night."

"*We* changed them!" she cried, missing his point, and he started as in relief at the pronoun she had used with such evident spontaneity. "Oh, no! He was so good to us; he was so kind to me. Do *you* believe we would do that?"

She raised in appeal one of the hands that he had suspected. He studied it, fine and small and well proportioned, and he rubbed his chin slowly with the backs of his fingers. He said, almost reluctantly,

"Well, maybe *you* didn't."

"Oh I'm glad of that—I'm so glad of that!" Relief tumbled from her lips in words and tone, and for a time she pleaded with him to forget the story, to believe that no planned harm would have come to his father there, and her impulsiveness, her beauty, the spell of youth and moonlight took both suspicion and steadiness from David MacKinnon's heart. "Since then I've had no one, but my dog and—my mother."

"Mother?"

"Her picture. That's all I have of her; it's all I ever knew of her." He meditated on this as she continued: "Your father liked my mother's picture. He saw it the night before he—died. He took it in his hands and told me he hoped I'd grow up to be as sweet a woman as my mother must have been. He was so gentle."

The lad nodded.

"A kind man." He was as sober as he had been bitter. "Was he—was he happy that night?"

"He wasn't ever happy. He was just kind, and sometimes sort of sad, but he always tried to make people happy. It seems to me that that last night his smile was—sort of sweeter than ever. He stood for a long time holding my mother's picture in his hands, alone with me, and talking about girls growing up. I used to hold it afterward when I wanted him. It was the last thing of mine he touched. Would you like to see my mother's picture, David?"

He hesitated and looked about slowly.

"Yes," he decided. It was, somehow, a link with his father.

He followed Eve over the rail to the dock.

"Is this all wrong?" he asked himself. "Is she, like the rest here, at his mercy? Or *is* it only actin'? I shouldn't be leavin' my boat alone—not here—but——"

He did not notice the dark blotch in the shadow of the net-house as they passed, and he did not look back, so he had no chance of seeing it stir and grow to the proportions of a man, peering out at the two figures going away.

MACKINNON stood again in the room where he had stood last night, but this time there was about him no hostility or defiance. He held the photograph to the lamplight and asked himself how a woman like that could mate with a man like Eldred. A sensitive face, a sweet face—so in contrast with the man who was called "king"—and looking suddenly at the girl, he felt a wave of sympathetic curiosity for her—and a thrill, for her serious eyes were so clear and her parted lips so gentle. His reason called out to him to beware, but a more powerful impulse made him put by the warning that this was Garden Island and that last night he had defied Norman Eldred!

"I've been glad an' sorry that the storm put me in here," he said finally. "I guess now I'm glad again."

"I am, too. Why didn't you come before?"

He spoke gravely.

"This place has meant a run of bad luck for us, an' that was all. When my mother died I wanted to come—was only a kid, but I was for it"—unsteadily. "She made me promise I wouldn't, so I stayed away—or tried to. The lake itself pitched me in here."

He talked slowly, with considerable pauses between phrases, and seemed more interested in the girl's face than in what he said.

"A man's a fool to try to get away from the job that's cut out for him. You can't beat it. I promised I wouldn't come an' tried to stay away, an' here I am! I've thought about it a lot an' about my father; I've wondered what he was thinkin' just before the end."

He looked down at the picture he held and then placed it on the table with a queer smile.

"That's one reason I'm glad I'm here; I've found out somethin' about him. I'll be goin', now."

"Don't go—not just yet!"

There was anxiety in her voice, and when a shadow of suspicion crossed his face and he asked sharply, "Why?" the girl was confused—just for a moment, and then, putting her finger-tips on the table-top, she said:

"Because in the morning you'll be going away and you'll be in and out, and there's no telling when I can talk to you. I've been needing somebody, and you're the first one—and it seems as if I'd *have* to talk."

"What about?"

"My father—" she began and looked away as if confused, then set her gaze on his face and went on, talking in a low voice and unsteadily: "I don't like it here any more. I don't know what to make of things or of myself—the way I feel, I mean. Did you ever want to talk to somebody so bad that you thought you'd—you'd cry if you didn't, and there wasn't anybody to talk to?"

David settled himself on the corner of the table, arms folded, one foot swinging.

"No; I've never felt that way."

"But there always has been somebody to talk to when you wanted to talk, hasn't there?"

"Maybe that's it. Maybe I've never had to talk very bad." And when she did not continue he asked, "What's the matter here with your father and you?"

She shook her head.

"I don't know. I've thought that if your father was here, I could talk to him and he'd help me understand. He was the only one I could think of until you came yesterday. When I saw you, and you talked to me and I wasn't afraid of you, and when I found out you were going to sail from here, I thought, maybe—perhaps you were going to be my friend, like your father was, and that I could talk to you like I could to him." Her constraint was gone by then. She talked rapidly, naturally, without confusion, and most earnestly. "I expect a girl could get along with being just lonesome. I know I could, because I was lonesome for a long time. I didn't know what it was at first. It seemed I'd been lonesome for years before I found out about it. That wasn't so long ago—when I found it out, I mean—and then I found out another thing—something worse. I'm—I'm afraid, David."

"Afraid? Of what?"

SHE was troubled by that and shook her head.

"I don't know. Of everything, I guess. Of the men, mostly, and of my—" She checked herself, paused and hurried on: "Yes; the men. I always kept away from them, even when I was a little girl, because they frightened me. But that kind of fright isn't like—like being afraid now is.

"I don't know much about men except what my father has told me, but a girl doesn't have to be told, I guess. It isn't what they say or do; it's the way they look at you. I knew what that meant before my father said anything. Any girl could understand that without being told. Sometimes, lately, it's seemed like I couldn't stand it another day. So long as my father was here, I felt sort of safe—until to-night, when Mosseau grabbed me, and now I know I'm not safe even with my father. But even the other, even when I told myself that men wouldn't do more than look while my father was here, I—I can't tell you what it was, except that I was afraid and didn't know why."

She paused and traced a line on the table with a small finger, hesitating.

"And then there's—my father." Her voice was only a breath, and MacKinnon's foot stopped swinging. "He—he's so strange. He wants me to keep by myself, like he keeps by himself. Just the two of us; that's all he wants—nobody else at all. He brought Miss Whitney here—she was a school-teacher—and when I got to liking her, he sent her away. He won't let me talk to other folks; he doesn't even like me to have my dog Friend. I went out to your boat last night, because I knew you were alone and all gone and couldn't hurt me, and I—it seemed I couldn't go another day without seeing somebody and talking to somebody. He's warned me about men ever since I was little, and tells me the only way to be safe is to expect they're going to hurt me and be ready for it—and he keeps me in the store when I'm more afraid all the time. He's right. If I let the men think I was afraid, nothing could stop them. I know that. Whenever my father thinks I'm wanting to talk to other people, it makes him mad. It seems it's been this way for ever so long—that I've been lonesome and afraid, and that my father has been this way. Maybe I notice it now because I'm getting a little—tired."

Her voice, anyhow, was weary on this last, and David unfolded his arms, puckering his lips as if he might whistle. He studied her briefly and then said,

"You don't care much about your father."

She started.

"Don't say that!"—breathlessly.

"Why not?"

"Because that would be wrong."

"What would?"

Their gazes clung an instant and then Eve turned her face away as if in shame, but she said,

"Not wanting your father—even to touch you!"

"So it's that bad, eh? Oh, you've told me now; no use tryin' to explain,"—as she started to protest somewhat guiltily. The girl lowered her head again and was silent, and for a moment the man gazed at her, very conscious of the splendid column of her neck, the fine texture of her skin, the sheen on her blue-black hair. He rose and stood close to her, touching her shoulders to turn her about. "Look up at me! I've been around a little, but this is the queerest yarn I've ever heard. Believe me, if it hadn't been, I wouldn't 'ave stayed here this long, leavin' my boat alone in this place. Now, what do you want me to do for you besides listen?"

At first he thought he saw response in her uplifted face, but that faded, and the girl drew away rather sharply, as though in alarm; but her gesture was accounted for by this, to her, incredible fact: a man she did not fear, who had fought for her once, was offering to help her now, and against her father.

She was confused and frightened and flattered, but she had him to think about, and she burst out nervously:

"I want you to go away now, David. I've talked and it's helped. My father—he'd be terribly mad if he thought you'd said that—offered to do more than listen. He wouldn't stop at anything if he thought I had told you this, and if he came in and found you here——"

"He don't scare me."

"Don't you say that!" she cried. "Don't say that, David MacKinnon, or what you think happened to your father——"

He had moved as she drew away from him, and that change brought him in line with a window which the girl's body had screened. He started.

"What's that?"

Eve turned, too, and looked out. A crimson smear was rising into the night.

"Fire!" she whispered.

MacKINNON sprang forward. As he opened the door, he swung about and turned one scorching, accusing look on the girl behind him, a look which wiped out all that he had said, as his rebuke in the store an hour ago had wiped out the sweetness of having been defended. He left the door open behind him and ran down the steps, down the path toward the dock, desperately, for his *Annabelle* was a hopeless mass of flames.

The fateful consequences of the burning of the *Annabelle* are related in the next instalment of "The Beloved Pawn." See December EVERYBODY'S—out November 15th.

The Chain

You Are Familiar, Perhaps, with the Methods of Our Home Brand of Office-Getters. Here's the Way It Is Done in the Orient

By George E. Holt

THE *basha* of Tangier was a Moroccan notable with a long and euphonious name and an honorable pedigree. He was a *shareef*, or descendant of the Prophet, and, although comparatively poor, a man of importance, riding in state when he went forth, surrounded by an escort of guards and subordinate officials. His robes and turban, like his beard, were always immaculately white; he rode inevitably a spotless, snowy mule, sleek and fat, with trappings of silk and embroidered leather; and some of his guards preceded him, clearing a pathway to the shouts of: "*Balak! Balak!* Make way for the master!"

Mustapha, in contrast, was a muleteer who drove caravans between Tangier and Fez. He had once had a last name, but he had forgotten it. He was pretty sure as to his father but not at all as to his grandfather. His brown *djellaba*—almost his only garment—was patched and dirty and, like Mustapha himself, smelled of mules. His head was shaven except for the scalp-lock by which he confidently believed Allah some day would jerk him into paradise, and about it was wrapped a thin and shiny rope of braided camel's hair. His brown legs were bare and spotted with white scars, where *hekka*, or camel-itch, had bitten into the flesh, and his heavy sandals were held in place by leather thongs over his big toes.

Between *basha* and muleteer stretched the bottomless abyss of difference in birth. Yet the whim of Allah created a chain of fate, at one end of which he placed the *basha* and at the other end the muleteer.

Politics in Morocco are worse than in America or Europe. The pot boils more fiercely and more constantly. Those who hold offices must fight always to retain them. Those who do not apparently must fight always to secure them. And above all the sultan sits, lifting and casting down as becomes his mood, and thereby upsetting the plans of men.

Now it came about that his majesty found it necessary to appoint a new vizier. One had been indiscreet and, having drunk a cup of tea in the wrong place, had suddenly passed on into the smiles of Allah. As his successor, the eye of the sultan came to rest upon the *basha* of Tangier. Shortly the *basha* received a careful word-of-mouth communication that the higher post was his—for a certain consideration. The consideration was about fifteen thousand dollars in our monetary system. All Moorish officials buy their posts.

Greatly did the *basha* desire to accept the offer. The title carried with it many things, all of which were more than acceptable to him. He was not a rich man, and he did not have the necessary money. But he felt sure of his ability to secure it. Wherefore he asked three days of grace to arrange the matter, and these were granted.

Promptly he called to his side his *khalifa*, or chief subordinate officer, and to his interested ears explained the situation.

"Bring me at once, then," he concluded, "the sum of ten thousand dollars, which, with what I have, will make the necessary total, and I shall see that you are appointed *basha* in my place."

Now, the *khalifa* did not have the ten thousand dollars. The utmost that he could lay his hands upon was half this amount. But he did not tell the *basha* this. That would have caused the *basha* to turn elsewhere. Wherefore he assured his master that the money would be forthcoming, and went away to consider the matter.

As a result of his meditations, his slippers led him to the little office of the *kadi*, or judge, whom he found squatting cross-legged upon his cushions, reading the Koran. The *kadi* was an old acquaintance of his, wherefore he spoke what was in his mind without the usual verbal détours.

"And so," he finished, "give me the sum of five thousand dollars, and when I become *basha*, I will appoint you *khalifa*."

Now, the post of *khalifa* was much more remunerative than that of *kadi*, and the judge greatly desired to take advantage of the offer. The five thousand dollars it would cost him he could regain by the appointment of subordinates. He had available just about one-half of the requisite amount. But he assured the *khalifa* that the money would be forthcoming.

The *khalifa* thereupon took his departure, and the *kadi* sent a messenger for his scribe, who was in *shraa*, or court. When the scribe arrived, he told him what was in the wind.

"And thus," he ended, "there is opportunity for you to become *kadi*. Give me two thousand and five hundred dollars, and when I become *khalifa*, I will appoint you my successor as judge."

These were sweet words to the scribe, and he hesitated not at all in accepting the terms.

"To-morrow," he said, "I shall bring you the money." And hastened away to one Achmed Farji, the owner of a little coffee-house, because he himself did not have the two thousand five hundred dollars he needed. But he held a mortgage on Achmed Farji's coffee-house, and, although the mortgage was not yet due, his only chance lay in collecting it. He found Achmed squatting on his cushions, drinking a cup of his own coffee. In a hundred words he presented the case, and offered not only to forgive the six months' interest due at ten per cent. but to be fully satisfied with twelve hundred dollars, if paid at once, instead of the full amount of close to two thousand.

"And of course," he concluded, "I shall secure the money somewhere, and I shall become *kadi*; and to be a friend of the *kadi* is very wise."

Of this the coffee-house keeper was well satisfied; indeed, he had suffered no little at the hands of unfriendly *kadis*. If the judge were to be personally interested in his misfortunes— Besides, there was much money to be saved. So, having finished his coffee, the scribe departed, with the assurance of Achmed Farji that the twelve hundred dollars would be awaiting him in the morning. And while the scribe was hastening back to *shraa*, Achmed sought out the master of the *fandak*, or caravanserai, which lay just behind the coffee-house. He came at once to the point.

"Thrice," he said, "you have desired me to sell you my café, and thrice I have declined. But now I am desirious of leaving this city, to go to my old home in Fez. Therefore I will sell you the café for seven hundred dollars. But I must have the money early to-morrow morning."

"*Aweely! Aweely!*" cried the *fandak*-master. "Only yesterday I had the money in hand. Some I still have. But I bought mules. But, let me see—I must have the coffee-house. I have plans for it. Yes; I am certain it can be managed. By to-morrow morning."

HARDLY had the coffee-house proprietor left the *fandak* before there was a clatter of hoofs and a half-dozen laden mules ambled into the enclosure, followed by Mustapha, the muleteer. At sight of him, the *fandak*-master's face brightened.

"Mustapha," he said, "I have been considering the matter of which you have spoken many, many times, and——"

"Concerning Amina?" interrupted Mustapha.

"Concerning my daughter Amina," agreed Amina's father. "And I have changed my mind. You are industrious, and she will not have to work unduly hard. You will make her a good husband, *inshallah*. And so—she is yours for three hundred dollars. But at once."

"Now, how have I offended Allah?" cried Mustapha, raising his gnarled brown hands toward heaven. "To-day I have not that amount. *Aweely! Aweely!*" His voice cracked in pain, for he had long desired the buxom Amina. "But—wait!" He laid a pleading hand upon his companion's shoulder. "Perhaps — perhaps. Give me until sunset. There is one who owes me money; perhaps he will pay."

"Go to him at once, then," commanded Amina's father, "and return as soon as you may. The business is pressing. Besides, there is Hadj Omar——"

"May Allah confound him!"—this from Mustapha, who knew that the ancient Hadj Omar likewise desired the girl. "I go speedily."

A quarter of an hour later, the guard at the door of the *basha's* house stopped Mustapha, the muleteer. To his first requests and final pleadings that he be permitted to see the *basha*, they returned jeers and threatened blows.

"But it is a matter of greatest importance," sobbed Mustapha.

"Ho! Ho!" jeered the guards. "Is one of your mules ill of a belly-pain—or desire you to tell his excellency how to fill the city treasury?" So said one. And another:

"He must pass! He carries a letter from the throne concerning—concerning the new vizier. Ho! Ho! Ho!"

Words suddenly died, and the laughter, and the guards grew swiftly stiff in salute. Behind them the door had opened silently, and a figure in a flowing white *k'sa* stood framed in the doorway.

"What is the jest—and the talk of a new vizier?" The voice of the *basha* sounded loud in the embarrassed silence.

"Twas but a joke, O master!" explained one of the guards. "This fellow demanded audience with you on—on a matter of greatest importance, *he* said. At that we laughed."

"And, O master," broke in Mustapha, "it *is* a matter of greatest importance, *to me*."

The *basha* drew back a step and laid one hand upon the door, as if to close it. Then Kismet bridged the abyss between them; he smiled slowly and commanded Mustapha to enter.

"And now?" he asked, when the door closed behind them.

Mustapha fell upon his knees and blurted out an account of the situation. In order to secure Amina, he must have a hundred dollars more than he possessed.

"But—what have *I* to do with that?" asked the *basha*, puzzled. He was a kind-hearted man—but was not accustomed to be asked for a hundred dollars by muleteers.

"O master—it is thus: I have been carrying grain for your Excellency's stables. It amounts to more than one hundred dollars now. I should not have asked payment except—except for the matter of Amina. And—if your Excellency could but give me an order, Allah will bless you, and—and——"

The *basha* stiffened for one surprised moment; then his angry impulse subsided. He clapped his hands, and in answer a guard appeared and saluted.

"Take this man to my treasurer and give him a hundred dollars. At once!"

THUS, while the purple mists of night were spreading like gossamer upon the opalescent city, a series of transactions took place without loss of time. Mustapha returned to the *fandak* and gave three hundred dollars into the hands of Amina's father. Amina's father opened the door of his house to Mustapha, and went swiftly to the café, where he gave over seven hundred dollars and became its owner. After a glass of coffee with the new proprietor, the former host went to the house of the scribe, to whom he gave twelve hundred dollars in exchange for a certain document. Shortly thereafter, the scribe sat with the *kadi* and handed to him the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars. And this money, with its equal, very soon thereafter was passed on to the *khalifa*, who thereupon went to the house of the *basha*, carrying two bags of gold in which there was ten thousand dollars. The next day the *basha* remanded to the sultan's treasury the price agreed upon for the viziership. And the following day a notice of his appointment was posted upon the wall at the Place of the Three Gates for all to read who could. Mustapha, the muleteer, could not, but he asked of a guard at the gate what the proclamation might be.

"It concerns a new vizier," replied the other roughly. "Which in no way concerns a lousy driver of flea-bitten mules."

Mustapha grinned at the rebuff.

"True!" he observed philosophically. "What have *I* to do with viziers?"

And he resumed thinking of Amina.

Introducing a New Author—

Pandora, Pugh *and* I

A Very Likable Adventure Story Laid in Cuba Twenty Years Back. The Sort of Thing That Will Appeal to Those Who Remember the Work of Richard Harding Davis

By Walton Hall Smith

Illustration by O. P. Schmidt

PUGH, of the Atlantic Refineries, carries two wicked-looking knife-scars, and both in the back at that. This goes to prove that Puerto Padre, in the southwest of Cuba, was a hard-boiled spot.

Pugh saw Puerto Padre for the first time a couple of years after Dewey and T. R. scared off the Spaniards, when the country was so wild he had to cut away the bush before he could beach his dory. Pugh always told this about half-way through the second pint of Bacardi, and personally I find it rather hard to believe, for at present there is a clear strip of sand, and sand makes rather unfertile soil for heavy verdure. But Pugh said it, and people were not in the habit of doubting Pugh, drunk or sober. Nevertheless, he came, and, judging from the celerity with which the cane fields sprang into being, he must have put the fear of God into every nigger thereabouts in double-quick time.

Now, Pugh and I were great friends, for Pugh is quarrelsome and I am not. But, due to a number of extraordinary happenings, it goes further than that. The first of these occurred the day I arrived at Puerto Padre. As I recollect it now, we had anchored about a half a mile off the beach, because the skipper had no chart of the harbor and therefore couldn't find the town, which lay round the bend. It was hotter than the proverbial hinges, and the tide was racing by at such a clip that a ban had been placed upon swimming. I guess we must have been short of men. In those days, it was all right to disobey an order as long as you didn't get caught disobeying it, and if you did, it meant you on the deck, with the skipper on one side and the mate on the other, each hunting for a soft spot to plant his boot.

But here I frankly admit an unconquerable weakness. If it's warm enough, the water's blue and clean enough and I stand and watch it long enough, I'll be in, in spite of skipper, boots and all. It's inevitable.

I figured the skipper to be taking a nap, and, of course, figured wrong, for he was very much awake, and proved it by waiting until I was about fifty feet from his packet, which is an easy pistol-range, and then ordering me back at the point of his weapon for my beating. The beach looked further away than it had from on deck, and, besides, the tide was running out, but it was a chance worth taking, for if I made land with a whole body, their chances of finding me seemed sufficiently remote. I turned over on my back to watch the skipper and kept on swimming. He raised his voice and then his gun. I ducked. The tide was pulling like a Missouri mule beneath the surface, and three feet was about as deep as it was possible to go and still make progress. I held my breath as long as I could, then exhaled under water and bobbed up my head. There were a couple of sharp reports, but they didn't connect, for I was under again.

Things were pretty hot while the range was good, but as the distance grew and the

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shooting became less frequent, I risked one look back and noticed that the mate had the gun; evidently they were taking turns. I wondered why they didn't lower a boat, but I guess I flattered myself. In the days of the square-riggers, an apprentice more or less was not a matter of importance.

Sand scraped my foot while still a good two hundred yards from shore, and a moment later the water was only waist-deep. I observed mentally that this was a singularly shallow beach and proceeded a few more steps, thinking to wade all the way in, when suddenly the bay closed over my head again. I made another mental observation relative to sand-bars and swam on twenty or thirty yards. Then, as before, I found footing. Here was a second surprise; for the same performance occurred again, and furthermore continued to occur three additional times until I finally walked on land. It certainly was tricky. What I had supposed to be a fine gradual beach was nothing but a bunch of bars pockmarked in between with deep holes.

The scorching sand was crossed in a hurry, but once on the grass I turned to take a last look at the ship. If I expected to see the crew manning the inshore rail to bid me farewell, I got a jolt. My little episode was over.

THE next and quite important question was where to go, and this was momentarily answered by the discovery of Pugh's path. It was fairly new then. The grass was long, and small branches from above still swung across it. It was not winding, but proceeded straight away, as though eager to get somewhere. The white-topped stumps of those bushes bespoke intimacy with a bolo. Pugh's path was a pretty fair reproduction of Pugh himself.

After five minutes walk I came upon the clearing, in the center of which stood Pugh's house. It was a large space surrounded by a practically perfect circle of palms. The grass had been cut with such uniformity that it almost seemed a lawn-mower had been used, and the house, which was of medium size and mounted upon piles several feet above the ground, appeared to have just received a coat of whitewash. I was just noticing that the door off the porch was of real screen when that door opened and out came Pugh.

He certainly blended perfectly with the background—clothes white, shoes white, hair white, too. Honestly, if it hadn't been for the redness of his face, it would have been difficult to see him. But he saw me, and made no bones about letting me know it. I stood quietly and watched him as he carefully approached, lifting each foot well above the grass so as not to stain his shoes. I could not help comparing this immaculate person with the piece of human jetsam standing in front of him, clad only in a pair of swimming-trunks. He came forward several more steps, still studying the ground to pick each spot before finally deigning to rest his foot upon it. Then he looked up. Once I looked into the eyes of a captive devil-fish and had a queer sensation up and down my spine. I had the same sensation now. Later, I noticed that Pugh's face was soft and round like a cherub's, and that his complexion was like a cherub's, too, but at this moment I saw only those furious eyes. Perhaps the fact that they were albino had something to do with the white heartlessness of them, but whatever it was, they held me rooted to the spot and speechless.

Pugh slowly slipped his hand inside his coat, and a second later it was obvious that I was about to be shot.

"Who the hell are you?" he asked, with deliberation. There was a weighty pause. "If you can't answer, I'll blow your roof off," he said, still calm and deliberate.

I opened my mouth, but it was no go. I couldn't make it.

"All right," Pugh was continuing; "you've passed up your chance." His words dragged painfully across his teeth, and the gun was still on a geometric line with my forehead. I watched it with interest. "Young friend, your robbing-days are over."

Then I heard the gun go off, roaring in my ears, and simultaneously something kicked my right leg out from under me and down I went. Dimly I dragged my hand across my forehead and back into my field of vision. No blood—yet I had unmistakably been shot. Instinctively I felt my leg and looked at my hand again. It was scarlet, and felt warm and sticky.

"Thought you said 'my roof,'" I said faintly, and waited, but as a reply was not forthcoming, I raised my head and saw

Pugh looking at me. His eyes had a very different expression—there was no gun in sight, and his hands were in his pockets.

"Where did you come from," he asked.

"The hooker out in the bay."

"You swam in against the ebb-tide?"

"Yes."

"You're a damn fool!"

"Why did you shoot me?"

"It's a mistake—but I can fix you up all right. You're only burned, but you can't go back to your ship to-night. I'll have a boy row you out in the morning."

"But I'm not going back to the ship."

"The hell you say! Won't they come after you?"

"I doubt it."

A light flared up in Pugh's eyes again.

"Well, it won't make any difference, anyhow. If you don't want to go back, you don't have to—I promise you that."

I smiled in conjecture as to what chance this one man would have against the skipper, the mate, the boatswain and a few others, but I didn't know Pugh then. He offered his hand, and I was pulled to my one good foot. Then, turning toward the house, he shouted,

"Oh, Scotty, bring my rain-coat!"

There appeared almost at once a soft-spoken black boy who used English surprisingly well, and whose function, in order to prevent his roof being blown off, I found out afterward, was to act as chambermaid for Pugh. He held the coat respectfully while Pugh slid into it, then was ordered back to the house. Pugh, his whites thoroughly protected, placed my arm about his shoulders and we proceeded across the lawn.

THUS was I shot by Pugh, and thus forgiven for having been shot by him. Of course, I didn't have that attitude then, but with Scotty's help I contrived to learn fairly fast. I learned so fast, in fact, that three weeks later, when I was graciously forgiven for saving Pugh's life, I marveled at his clemency. Lots of men are like Pugh. You simply get in the habit of letting them rule the roost until some day you become aware of the fact and resent it. Then there's usually a fight, because they don't dethrone easily. But, with Pugh, you never become aware, and therefore never resent it. It's too ever-present—you don't get a chance to discover how it would be otherwise. And even if you did, I don't think you would resent it, for there's something about Pugh— Maybe the foundation of the whole thing is respect.

Pugh could do few things, but he certainly could do those few wonderfully well. Which, by the way, you had to find out for yourself. He had the ability to rule as well as the temperament, and where there is real ability, one can forgive almost anything but conceit, and that Pugh surely didn't have. I had thought it the merest providence that I wasn't shot through the head instead of the leg—never once laid it to Pugh's dexterity and matchless marksmanship until Scotty furtively informed me that his boss could shoot.

Pugh was consistent. In all the time I knew him, I never saw but one act that wasn't entirely in keeping with his general make-up, and that was when he personally helped me into his house ten minutes after I first laid eyes on him. That was a lot for him. And it was altogether too much for Scotty, who didn't get over his amazement for a period of days. I have always thought the reason for his doing it was his knowledge that I swam in against the tide that day. Pugh couldn't swim a stroke and could not learn—simply couldn't, though Lord knows he tried valiantly enough. But he had great admiration for anybody who accomplished something that he had failed at.

But he didn't succeed in keeping his promise about fixing me up. The man that gets a wound in the tropics is liable to be out of luck, because the chances of its healing without infection are very small indeed. The warm air seems to be malignant with poisons harmless to the healthy skin but terrible with any kind of cut or abrasion. I lay on a cot under a book-shelf in Pugh's living-room for ten days, while Pugh daily cauterized the ulcer on my leg and told me to shut up whenever I suggested rising.

During these days Scotty patiently administered to all my wants, and it was from him that I learned why I had been shot. It seems there had been a consistent petty pilfering of household effects for the past year—everything from grass mats to crockery had been taken, and every effort to lay hand on the perpetrator had been in vain. Pugh had threatened the life and the lives of the families of every nigger on the plantation, but no one knew anything. Things simply disappeared, and that's all there was to it. The last outrage had happened only the day before my advent, when Pugh's rock-crystal rum-decanter, six glasses and sterling-silver tray had gone with the rest of the plunder. This set had been Pugh's pride—a gift from some thoughtful soul back in the States—and his fury, according to Scotty, was terrible to behold when the loss was discovered. The very next day was, therefore, an unpropitious moment for a naked and suspicious-looking stranger to appear.

One thing particularly that Scotty took great interest in telling was the science of capturing cougars, which he had been doing lately in his spare time and at which he was a past master. The incentive was a small reward from Pugh. Cougars are pretty well cleaned out of the West Indies to-day—they seem to be kept pretty busy killing off unwary Brazilians—but it was very different then. I had a vivid description from Scotty of just how he caught them one by one in a brush-covered pit baited with fresh meat, and entangled them in a native net-device which seemed very primitive to me when I saw it afterward, but which had served the purpose nevertheless, of transporting them, helpless, to an especially constructed cage.

This was of wood, not palings but solid, with four-inch air-holes in the top. The door was held in place only by a heavy palm-trunk placed against it, and the whole thing was only seven feet by eight, and five feet high. I rather think that if the cougars had been given a guess, they would just as soon have been dead as penned up for an indefinite period in a box like that. Scotty confessed to me that it had originally been intended for only one animal, but the trap had been more successful than he anticipated, so he had simply put them all in. Pugh would do away with them all very soon, anyway, and then he would have room for more. As a matter of fact, I don't think Pugh ever meant to allow the lion-snaring industry on his plantation to reach such proportions, and one morning he supported my thought by questioning Scotty as to how many cougars he had.

"Six, sir," trembled Scotty.

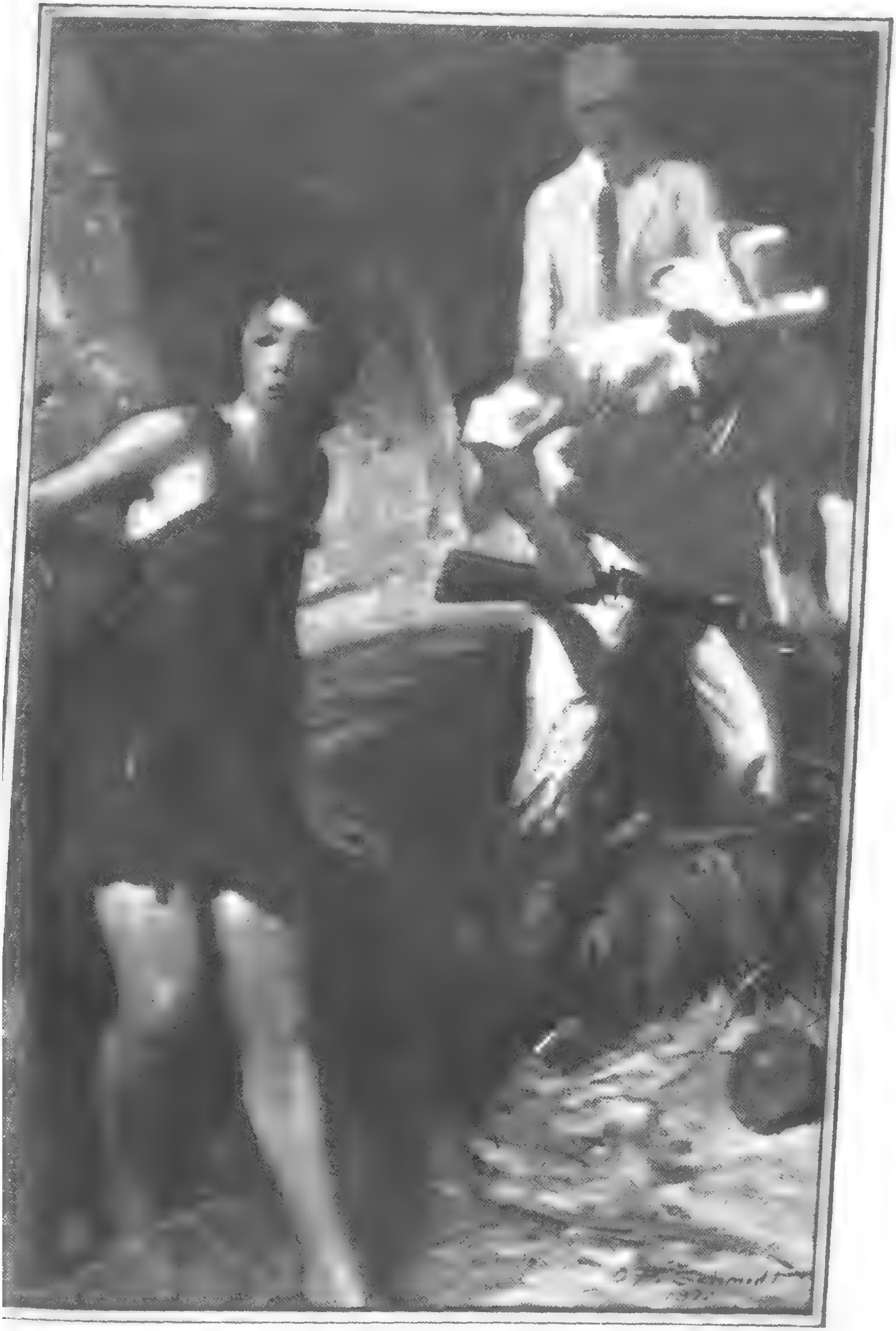
"Six too many," said Pugh. "You should have let me know long ago. Scotty, in a very few days you're going to see a little slaughter." Which he did.

THE first day up brought a series of jolts. Pugh had eaten early and gone to the fields, leaving instructions with Scotty that I was to put on an outfit of his clothes and wait his return. I went him one better and borrowed his razor, too. I am a little taller than Pugh, but when one has been in rags for months and in bed for days, he feels like a king in almost any kind of garment that's clean. I strutted up and down in front of Pugh's mirror, surveying myself from every possible angle, until Scotty announced breakfast. I was just contemplating whether to stand up and save the crease in my trousers or sit down and enjoy my food when in came Pugh.

"Son," he said, "there won't be a ship down her again for three months. The *Fuego* and the *Atlantic* just left, each with a load of cane. Now, this morning I called my foremen together and told them I had a new field-manager—you go on the payroll from to-day on. Don't know yet what your salary will be, but it will be all right. You can draw on it from time to time if you like, but God knows there's nothing to spend money for in the village except booze."

"But the only trouble is that I don't know the first thing about this work," I cut in. "I just graduated from the Naval Academy, and was taking a cruise on a square-rigger as an apprentice seaman to gather a little practical experience during my vacation. It's impossible for me to stay here. If I——"

"Oh, wait a minute," Pugh bellowed. "In the first place, you don't have to know anything. I'm sick and tired of having these niggers running to me every time one of their gang steps on a horned viper or any little thing goes wrong. I want you to listen to their tales of woe and then come and tell me. Then I'll tell you what to do. Savvy? Besides all that, let me tell you that there's no money in a seafaring life—all your life spent navigating packets over the face of the ocean and then die in the poorhouse. Of course that's none of my damn business. I expect you to leave on the first boat—but there's no harm in picking up a little money in the mean time."



I moved cautiously to where the girl was standing and peered in the opening.

I finished my breakfast in a state of bewilderment while Pugh opened his morning bottle and Scotty brought glasses. A drop of the yellow Bacardi dropped on Pugh's trousers and he swore long and quietly at the unknown hand that had got away with his decanter.

"How about clothes?" I asked presently.

"For you, you mean? Well, I've got a couple of dozen white suits in there. They ought to hold you until the ship comes. Then I'll let you have a couple to get back to the States. In return, you can send me down a case of Old Tom."

It was three days later that Pugh asked Scotty for the second time about his pets. Pugh and I had been out for target-practise. I was lying on my cot reading Bulfinch's "Age of Fable" (Pugh's favorite), and Pugh was cleaning his revolver, his rain-coat spread carefully over his knees.

"They've got to go to-day—that's all there is to it. I dreamed about the damn things last night—dreamed they got loose and chewed us to pieces. My gat was in its holster on the wall over my bed, but it kept swinging away every time I'd reach for it." He looked at me quickly as though to ward off any remark I might make regarding rum and its excessive consumption, but I thought it diplomatic to keep still.

Soon the three of us were walking through the palms in silence, Pugh and I side by side and Scotty, with the rifle, respectfully bringing up the rear. It has been arranged that Scotty was to mount the box and knock a side from above the brace that held the door; then, when the cougars came forth, Pugh would drop them one at a time. I had wanted to bring along a rifle, too, but Pugh wouldn't permit it. Said he didn't trust two guns. I was not exactly complimented, but as it turned out my gun would have been worse than useless anyway. The pen itself was nearly altogether hidden by the thick bush and was accessible from only one direction.

WHEN it comes to describing what happened when we rounded the last clump of bushes, I'll have to confess to being a little stumped. I remember it all with perfect clarity, but the first shock was followed with such lightninglike rapidity by a quick succession of others that the details are somewhat hazy.

I know Pugh shoved out his arm to motion us to stop, which was entirely unnecessary in my case, for I was gazing intently at the vision before us, and I guess it was the same with Scotty. Directly in front of the door to the cage, regarding the palm with a curious expression, stood a girl. There's no gainsaying the fact that it was a shock, nor that it was a shock of pleasure, for she was certainly very lovely to look upon. Her scant covering consisted of a crimson cloth reaching only just above her knees and tied with cords at the waist and breast. Her hair was drawn down tightly from her brow and braided in a long, iridescent braid—the gleaming curve of her olive-hued neck and shoulders, the lithe vigor of her body seemed to give forth a sort of aura of youth and splendid health.

She was totally unaware of our presence and continued to stand quietly for a minute or two. Then, quite suddenly, she stepped forward and put her weight directly on the trunk at its highest point. It fell to one side and the door dropped like a plummet. The girl stepped back with a low, clear cry. I looked quickly at Pugh, whose right hand was inside his coat. The first two beasts came out together like twin catapults, one above the other, springing straight for their victim—three hundred pounds of hungry, pent-up fury. Pugh got them both in midair with his revolver. Three more came out, piling over one another in their effort to escape, then swerved in a tandem in the opposite direction and streaked for the woods. Pugh got them, too. It was beautiful. For a moment we waited, all eyes glued on the entrance, but no more came.

"Take the rifle from Scotty and go up and look in," ordered Pugh easily. "I'll watch from here." I moved cautiously to where the girl was standing and peered in the opening. The other cat was lying just inside, fast bleeding to death from a gaping gash in the neck. Evidently he had not got along well with his roommates. I leveled my piece and blew his brains out. The excitement was over. Pugh and Scotty came up, the former unperturbed as usual, and we quietly surveyed the cause of it all.

"What do they call you at home?" asked Pugh in Spanish. The girl was silent. "The young lady tells me her name's Pandora," said Pugh, then continued in Spanish: "You should not have come to the plantation.

Hasn't your father told you that? When you leave the village, you must go in the other direction after this. Why did you come here, anyway?"

Pandora smiled gloriously.

"I came to beg of *señor* a few American cigarettes."

"Did your father send you?" questioned Pugh angrily.

"No, *señor;* for myself."

"Damned unlikely place she looked for them!" muttered Pugh, and then in Spanish: "If you want them you'll have to come to the house. I haven't any here."

We started back, Pandora walking ahead with Scotty. She was small and exquisitely molded, with neck and shoulders that would have done justice to a Phidian goddess. Her tiny feet seemed hardly to touch the ground as she moved along, and I watched her every step with delight. It's a known fact that in the mind of a man who is buried in some out-of-the-way hole, any and every woman sits upon an exalted pedestal, regardless of color, race or creed. And yet, in spite of all this most excellent wisdom of experience, I say unqualifiedly that Pandora, for classic beauty of feature and perfect symmetry of form, could have held her small head up in any gathering of women anywhere.

When we arrived at the house, Pugh handed Pandora a package of his treasured smokes, and then, with a very pointed air of finality, turned away. Pandora received the gift with a graceful gratitude that said a good word for the Spanish influence, immediately opening the package and lighting a cigarette.

"Let's have some lunch, Scotty," ordered Pugh.

"How many, sir?" returned Scotty.

"Three," said I.

Pugh poured out a jargon of rum.

"My God, I never knew it to fail—these guys that don't drink and don't swear. Pandora," he went on in Spanish, "you will stay to eat with us."

Pandora thanked him again, and forthwith took a seat on my cot.

"Does *señor* speak my language?" she inquired, addressing me.

I said that I spoke a very little.

"If *señor* would like, I will teach him. But perhaps there is no time?"

I looked at Pugh, who was pouring his next drink. His back was turned, but he looked belligerent.

"I will do no work for a week," I said. "If you would not mind coming over from the village—" Then, to salve Pugh, "It would be a great help in my work to know more Spanish."

Pandora was delighted. Why not start this very afternoon? We could sit on the grass at the edge of the beach, and she would point out different things to me and tell me their names. Perhaps Señor Pugh would come along and help?

"Yes; and perhaps he wouldn't, too!" blurted Pugh in English. "You're a fast worker—I'll say that for you—but you sure have got the guts of the devil himself. Say—do you think I want these village tramps to get the habit of running over here for entertainment? Why, it's taken me five years to get it finally through their heads, and then along you come and date up this child here for every afternoon."

'How old do you think she is?" I said.

'Not a day over seventeen at the outside." I was appalled, for she seemed easily six years older.

"Pugh," said I, "have you ever seen this girl before?"

"Never."

"Then admit this to me: You never saw any other of the native girls that were quite like her, did you?"

"In appearance?"

"In every way."

Pugh smiled.

"Well, they all look a lot older than they really are, and that's true in this case, but she seems to have it on them for intelligence and looks. She has it on them in nerve, too, for that matter."

"Well, I think," said I, "that she has it on the world."

"Oh, go to—" shouted Pugh, whirling and glaring at Pandora, who smiled. "Hell!" he finished, somewhat later.

THAT afternoon, with the aid of two sticks, I explained to Pandora the technic of using a knife and fork. We were seated in the shade of the palms, looking out over the quiet bay. An occasional school of garfish leaped toward heaven, always together, and disappeared into the blue again. Pandora talked and I listened—though understanding very little—lulled to contentment by the mellow softness of her tones. I saw the water through lazy, half-closed eyes.

"*Señor* will not tell Señor Pugh?" Pandora asked presently.

"What, Pandora?"

"*Señor* will not tell Señor Pugh if I show him my house?"

"No; of course not," said I, vaguely trying to recall what she had been saying.

She smiled and, taking my hand, led me to the water's edge.

"One moment—are we going to swim?" I asked in astonishment.

"*Si, señor;* if we are to see my house."

Her steady gaze showed me that she was perfectly serious. I was instantly swamped with bewilderment and thoughts of Pugh's coming down to the beach and a number of other possible catastrophies, but such ideas faded at the prospect of a swim—and especially with Pandora.

"If you will wait till I get my swimming-clothes, I shall be happy to see your house," I said a little eagerly.

Fortunately Pugh was in the fields when I arrived, so that I slipped into my trunks without interruption and hurried down the path to the beach to find the girl standing knee-deep in the water, waiting for me. Without ado we waded out, she leading, until we came to the first hole. Apparently she was familiar with every step of the way, for she struck out straight as a die, cutting the water with long, easy strokes. It was not until we reached the fourth bar that she stopped and waited for me, and here I made her eyes open wide with surprise by announcing that there was only one bar left.

"You have seen my house, *señor?*" she asked anxiously.

I assured her that I had not, and was immediately rewarded with one of her wonderful smiles. She stood for a time breathing slowly and deeply, then, pointing downward, took a final deep breath and dove beneath the surface in the direction of the outer bar. A moment I waited to see if she would come up, then filled my lungs and followed. Down through the cool green depths I coasted, just keeping within sight of her fluttering feet. At a little over two fathoms I could make out the bottom and noticed that, instead of the white sand I had expected, it had a dark appearance. And then, suddenly, I discerned the reason. There, spread out and held down at the corners by large white rocks were four dark-colored grass mats. But wait! At the end of one mat were a dozen or more teacups and saucers—at the other a square humidor. In another place were a collection of miscellaneous odds and ends, such as clay pipes, cartridges of different sizes, a white pitcher, several knives, and so on; and in another, on a round, shining tray, a decanter and six glasses. Surrounding the whole, enclosing possibly ten square feet of space, was a waist-high wall of the same white stones, piled pyramid-fashion and having green and brown seaweed coming from each crevice. In the very center was a thoroughly water-soaked mattress, also held down by stones at the corners, and upon this kneeled my beautiful companion, showing pearly teeth, her hair completely out of braid and extending upward toward the surface in dark diffusion.

I always prided myself upon my ability to hold my breath under water, being able to stay down a little over eighty seconds, but I am sure if there had been a timekeeper on the spot at this instance, all previous records would have toppled earthward. Finally, without waiting, I shoved off bottom and frantically stroked toward the top, breaking the surface in a shower of spray. The fresh air rushing into my lungs seemed like pure oxygen. I turned on my back and sculled slowly inshore until my feet touched the bar, and there I waited.

SHE didn't come and didn't come. I thought of the times I had heard anecdotes of South Sea Islanders and West Indians who could stay submerged for long periods of time, but there was scant comfort in that. The upshot was that I plunged in again, only to pass her half-way down. She was in no evident haste, and rising easily with her long hair like a trailing cloud behind. I caught her hand and we swam up together.

"Listen Pandora," said I, when we stood in the waist-deep water on the bar; "what if I should tell Señor Pugh what I have just seen?"

"But *señor* has said that he would not tell."

"Yes, I know; but those things must be returned, and therefore Pugh must know."

She came a step closer, and I felt her tiny hand grasp mine. All the wonderful appeal of her youth and beauty seemed to pour forth from her gorgeous eyes as she spoke.

"*Señor,* I love my house. I have had it since I was a little girl. The white rocks I brought from a great distance by myself. There is no one who has seen it or knows of it but you. *Señor*, you ***must*** not tell!"

I am no more than human—there's no denying. I turned my head and looked toward the beach, and at the same time discovered that the shocks of the day were not over. There on the sand, clearly outlined against the green of the shrubbery, stood a white figure.

My brow felt suddenly warm. It's a good thing I hadn't been too human.

We swam hurriedly in and confronted Pugh, whose pinkish-white eyes had a queer expression, strangely like they had that day just after he put a bullet through my leg, except that they seemed a little sheepish.

"I came to bring the cigarettes," he began. "Your friend here left them at the house." He handed Pandora the package. "What have you two wild asses been up to?"

"Taking a little swim," I answered lamely.

"Oh—I thought you were taking a walk on the bottom. God knows you were down long enough! Did you learn any Spanish?"

"Plenty for one day," I answered, with significance.

"Good! I'm glad to hear it. Are you coming back to the house now?"

I looked at Pandora, phrasing a question, but she shook her head.

"I must go to the village, but to-morrow I will see *señor.*" And with one of her thrilling smiles she turned and walked down the beach. Pugh and I started slowly away.

That evening after supper, Pugh talked long and seriously about the sorrows that attended white men who wasted their time with native girls. I was non-committal, merely saying that I wanted to pick up all the Spanish I could. He finally shrugged his shoulders and polished off a final hooker of Bacardi, as though to wash his hands of the whole matter. I confess I felt a sense of relief, though in spite of that, and also the rather eventful day, sleep that night was long in coming. I watched at least a thousand sheep jump over a wall, but Pugh's belongings out there four fathoms beneath the surface of the sea would not get out of the picture.

NEXT morning I sauntered down the path to the beach. Pugh had been up and out hours before, and I naturally supposed he had gone to the fields as usual, but upon coming to the end of the path, I immediately spotted a rowboat with Pugh in it, out, I judged, about as far as the fourth bar, where he had seen Pandora and me the day before. He was standing up, dressed only in swimming-trunks and sounding for depth with an oar. For a half an hour I watched, while he continued, first sounding, then withdrawing the oar and measuring the water-mark in relation to his height; then, evidently satisfied, he threw over a small boat-anchor and, carefully keeping one hand on the gunwale, eased himself down into the water. It was clear from the way he walked that he had never been on the bar before, for he headed directly away from the beach. I started to call out, but at the time I had no idea that he couldn't swim, and therefore kept silent and watched. Presently just what I knew would happen happened—Pugh disappeared. When he came up, he made a few awkward strokes in the general direction of the boat, and then down he went again. I sensed trouble. There was a slight outgoing tide, and he was very obviously not making any progress against it. But he never once called out. The next time he emerged there was no doubt about it, and I flatter myself that I got into action in pretty short order. My shoes were kicked off at once and I dropped my coat and slipped my trousers on the way to the water. The tide lent a hand.

When I reached Pugh, he was in the height of the struggling stage, and it was only after a well-placed kick in the solar plexus that I could bring him to the bar. It was a very different Pugh that lay in the stern-sheets of that boat, senseless and sobbing for breath, than the one who walked on shore—with his right hand inside his coat.

Once on the beach, I soon brought him round. I don't believe I ever saw a man with so much water in his lungs who could still kick, and I know I never saw a half-drowned one come to his senses so quickly. I had not worked over him ten minutes before he opened his eyes.

"Say, you," he said; "I might have been drowned."

"So you might," said I.

Somehow or other he got to the house alone—flatly refused to be accompanied, and somehow or other he sat up and ate a heavy lunch, stimulated by an amazing quantity of Bacardi. But that afternoon, and for a good many afternoons to come, Pandora and I were left alone.

Thus I saved Pugh's life, and was forgiven for so doing.

I think three weeks passed, but I'm not sure. It might have been four, or even five. But however long it was, I know that during those days I came very close to that beatific state which people sigh about and call "content." Even now, amid the never-ending haste and ceremony of a naval officer's life, I have no greater pleasure than to browse over the memory of those God-given hours spent in and above Pandora's house. Pugh and I used the mornings in target-practise, and he had ceased his questioning, simply having an understanding that I should depart for the beach each day after lunch.

There must, however, be an end to all things, and it came in this case one noon as I was leaving, when Pugh dropped the remark that he guessed he would come to the beach with me after this. I kept the bad news to myself until Pandora and I stood on the bar about to go down to the house. She received it in silence, looking at me intently for a while; then, quickly taking my hand, she bent and kissed it several times. When she looked up, her eyes were moist and shining. I drew her toward me, but she shook her head and pointed below.

We went down as usual, hand in hand, but instead of parting when we reached bottom, Pandora pulled me toward the humidor, which she quickly opened. I had always thought it empty, but instead it was filled with beautifully colored shells. She examined them for just a moment before selecting a very small and perfect one, which she pressed quickly to her breast and then gave to me. Her hand still lay in mine. Again I drew her slowly toward me, now all unresisting, until she lay like a child in my arms, her long hair floating over my shoulders. And thus, utterly oblivious of time or place, we rose slowly upward to the sunlit surface of the bay.

That evening, I had a case of nerves. It was one of those indescribably wonderful nights, such as you get only in the tropics. Pugh, who had completely wrecked the latter part of the afternoon, for me at least, had already taken to his bed and I had gone for a walk on the beach.

I have never seen anything more beautiful than the bay that night. Its quiet surface was flooded with silver, and the atmosphere, saturated with moonlight, transported one from the earth to an enchanted paradise. For many minutes I stood on the sand, feeling as one feels while under the soul-stirring influence of wonderful music wonderfully played.

At length I became dimly conscious that something was touching me on the shoulder. I stood still, hoping vaguely that whatever it was would go away. But it didn't go away; on the contrary, the pressure became steady. I turned slowly, loath to break the spell—and looked straight into the dark, luminous eyes of Pandora. I caught my breath for the barest instant, then all was quiet. Her soft arms crept naturally round my neck and her warm, damp lips pressed tightly to mine. For a long time we remained, swaying gently together, her quickened breath warming my cheek.

A DISMAL week went by. I went to the beach each day accompanied by Pugh, and each night by myself, but Pandora was gone. I wanted to go to the village, but for some reason couldn't bring myself to do it. Probably it was the fear of seeing something sordid. Better never see her again than to allow anything to mar a memory so perfect. But the strangest part of it all was Pugh's attitude. I simply couldn't make him out. He went about abusing Scotty and his foremen, cursing his food and generally hating anything that came within range of his angry eyes. At the time I thought it must surely be something else, but all doubts as to the cause of his distemper were soon dismissed.

We saw her first one afternoon as we sat on the beach, I in my bathing-trunks, as usual, from force of habit. I had been watching up the curve, expecting her to come from that direction, but she suddenly appeared out on the bar, and it was Pugh who saw her first. She came in as always, cutting the water with clean, long strokes, her feet churning a foaming lane behind. We both walked to the water's edge to meet her, and Pugh, before she was yet on land, demanded a report of her absence. I have to laugh at Pugh, who was disagreeable for days because I had invited the "village tramps" to the plantation. After a while Pandora and I swam out again while Pugh took his seat on the beach.

I was happy. Pandora was mine again, even though Pugh did sit on the beach, which, by the way, he never failed to do in any of the days that followed.

It came about finally that we never paid him any attention at all, but merely swam round and dove to the house as freely as though we were alone. I think this suited Pugh just as well, for since the catastrophe that attended his first attempt to unravel the mystery of the fourth sand-bar, he never showed the slightest curiosity. Not, however, that he wasn't burning up inside. He often called to us from the beach, telling us to race in when we came. At nights I went to the beach—that is, I went when I could get away from Pugh. Pandora was always faithful, though she often waited in vain.

AT LAST came the day of days. I thought Pugh had ordered the lawn cut, for I woke to hear a great confusion and babel of tongues, but they were the tongues of the native workmen as they carried past large clumsy bundles of freshly-cut sugar-cane. I dressed in a hurry and ran down to the beach without waiting for breakfast. The water was dotted with small cargo-boats, and anchored at some distance off the last bar was a big freighter. Pugh had beat me down, and was now standing in conversation with a group of men from the ship. When I came up he introduced me to the skipper and three mates as his field-manager, and, without waiting, proceeded to explain that I had been helping him out for the last three months but was going back to the States with them.

My surprise could not have been greater had I just been sentenced to die at sunrise. I managed to make an attempt at replying to the men and to learn that the ship sailed at daybreak the following morning, but there was a sinking sensation round my heart. Leave Pandora? It was unthinkable; yet that is what I was doing. My four years of hard study at the academy seemed very unimportant indeed. Pugh had been right—a seaman's life was a life of hell. Why go through with it all, when here was Pandora? What was a "career," anyway? Why bother? I was really happy—the goal of all endeavor—why give it up? I wandered back to the house in a sort of daze, these thoughts vaguely distorting my brain, and several times stopping to go back and announce my intention of staying, yet each time going on again. If I had chanced to meet Pandora at that moment, the game would have been up for fair, but I didn't meet Pandora, and, instead, I met Pugh. He came up from behind, panting from his exertion of running, and threw his arm round my shoulder.

"Boy," he said, "you'd better do it." He nodded his head convincingly. "Some day you'll be glad."

I am glad—so it must be admitted that Pugh was right, but I say, "Damn Pugh!" anyway.

That night I stayed in the house, and I did so because I was afraid to go out—think of it! It's a shameful thing to confess, but it's the truth. I just knew; that's all—I *knew*. After dinner Pugh gave me the salary that I didn't deserve, and a few clothes thrown in for good measure. We talked of many things, but Pugh avoided mention of my—and his—favorite topic of conversation. But it was immaterial to me, for my thoughts were mortgaged. About midnight the skipper came up for a gam and a jargon of rum. I tried to catch a wink or two on my cot before sailing-time, but my eyes were plastered open, looking hard into other eyes—eyes dark and luminous. I gripped the edges of the cot and shut my lids tightly, but those eyes burned on, just as they burn now as I write.

At three-thirty a sailor knocked on the door and told us it was sailing-time. Pugh led the way down the dewy path, and at the end I told him good-by. A boat lay waiting, and I climbed aboard without looking back. I sat in the stern-sheets, watching the water slip by under the keel. At the fourth bar the skipper made a remark about the shallowness of the water in certain places along the beach. I nodded, while the lump grew in my throat. How I would loved to slip over the stern and sink down—down within the walls of Pandora's house!

Aboard the ship I went directly to my quarters and sat on my bunk, head in hands, until the throbbing of the propellor announced that we were under way. Then—and not until then—did I allow myself to go aft. And not until my hands were on the taffrail did I allow myself actually to look back. It was just dawn, and the first red streak across the sky bathed the white sand of the beach and the white solitary figure upon it. Pugh waved a last good-by.

OUR Uncle's navy is not particular as to personal likes and dislikes. Witness my experience in the four years that followed. I don't mean to insinuate that the China station isn't a very fine station and all that, and I have nothing whatever against it except that I just didn't want to go there. But I did go, and, what's more, stayed for three years. For which I was rewarded with gold—the kind that goes around your coat sleeve, which happened to be the kind I wanted, so it was all right. For all that, it was a gala day when my orders to the Atlantic fleet finally came.

The next eight or nine months were spent mostly in transfers from one berth to another, finally getting settled just before the fleet started south for the winter, destination Guantanamo Bay. I was in a hurry, and no doubt for that reason we had nasty weather all the way, but when we did arrive, I was over with the first boat and on my way to Puerto Padre.

This time I came through the village, and had to be guided through the fields by an unkempt native who rendered the service for the consideration of a few pesos, and who left me at the outskirts of a certain circle of palms. It was familiar ground, and my heart beat a little faster as I walked through the trees and caught my first glimpse of the house, white and spotless as ever. I circled round the house stealthily, so as to walk in and surprise Pugh.

I crept carefully up the steps and flung the screen wide. Still unchanged, but the room was empty.

I called Pugh's name once, whereupon his door forthwith opened and I looked into two eyes, dark and luminous. My uniform-cap, white cover and all, dropped to the floor.

Pandora was the first to speak.

"I came here to live soon after you left," she said simply, and in English, "four days afterward. Señor Pugh and I have a son." I was conscious that her eyes were burning, but I was studying the design in a mat on the floor. "I thought never to see you again when you went away so quickly."

"Where is Pugh?" I asked.

"He is on the beach, shooting, and he has the boy with him. If you will sit down, they will be back soon. *You* will be glad to see my son."

I nodded without flinching.

I won't say that Pandora was unchanged, though it was difficult to find the difference. She seemed a little heavier about the hips and a little broader of shoulder. She was clothed in a one-piece gingham dress, and her hair was braided as always. But her eyes were undoubtedly the same.

"Pandora," I asked, "are you happy?"

She regarded me steadily for a time, but I turned away. I was a little afraid of Pandora's eyes. At length her reply came.

"Oh, yes, I am happy, I am very happy. I have my son." She hesitated. "Sometimes——"

"Sometimes what, Pandora?"

"Sometimes I go to my house."

I glanced up quickly. She was looking at me steadily, and I don't think I ever saw eyes so lovely. I rose instinctively and moved toward her, but she avoided me. For a second I stood irresolute, and then my hand fumbled in my pocket and I dropped upon the table a small exquisitely colored shell. When I looked at her again, her cheeks were damp.

I took her hand and spoke very quietly.

"Pandora, I am going away. I shall likely never return here. May I kiss you good-by?"

She closed her eyes, and I gathered her tightly in my arms, as I had before in her house on the bottom of the bay. She turned her head slowly until my lips found hers, and before my eyes swam a hazy vision of a moonlit beach—the beach of that glorious night so long ago.

She was standing on the veranda when I passed from view among the trees. She waved her hand in friendly farewell. She was game, and no mistake.

I walked through the fields the way I had come. My heart felt rather heavy.

"'Heart-whole and fancy free,'" I said aloud, and tried to smile—but I don't know; it didn't work, somehow.

Little Journeys Back Home

Giants

School-days, a Game of Marbles, a Bully and a Sequel That All of Us Have Witnessed or Participated In

By Henry Francis Granger

Illustration by Harry Fisk

SPRING was on the hills and over the valley. But for the river, it would have been in the valley and over the hills. But the river had swept the lowlands, strewing the ice, that dammed and choked and spread it, in heaped desolation over the flats.

So the valley lay sodden, scarred by twisting ridges of flood-débris, while the drained hills dried under the warmer upper airs, and the maple buds were swelling red, bluebirds fluttered along the warming rail fences and the first venturesome robins were spying out the land from naked tree-tops.

Portent more infallible than the first returning birds, the sap-pails hanging here and there upon the maples that bordered the streets, the warmth of midday—the boys were playing marbles.

In the trampled yard of the old brick school they clustered round each square-faced post that supported the high fence. Uneven posts and those from which only the bark had been peeled from the oval surface of saplings grown but post-size were not in demand, for the boys played "knock up and span," and paid but slight attention to "taw" and "knuckle down."

And the game as they played it went thus—as many an older small-town boy remembers: The boy to lead bounced or dropped his marble upon the ground anywhere within the segment of a quarter-circle drawn some few feet from the base of the post. The other player—and this, for the most part, was a two-handed game—must bounce his marble from the post to rebound and fall as near as might be to the marble upon the ground. If he could span with the fingers of his hand the space between the two marbles, he won. Then the last player's marble remained upon the ground as, in turn, they knocked up and spanned.

The advantage would seem to lie with the largest hand and the longest fingers, but, as in many a bigger game, it was the steadiest nerve and the truest eye that won.

And at a center-post, surrounded by a watchful circle of boys, Bobby and Theodore played together.

"They're touchin'!" Bobby threw all his weight on his straining fingers, flat as he could crowd them against the wet ground. Thumb and middle-finger tip each touched a marble, and Theodore growled assent.

With a laugh, the younger boy snatched up the marble won and scrambled to his feet.

"My lead!" With careless dexterity he bounced his marble from the post. "Bet you don't make it!" he cried, as Theodore, measured the distance with keenly appraising eye, edging a little more sidewise to strike the post at the angle that would land his marble within span of the mark.

"Got seven of yours now," taunted Bobby, as the elder boy studied his shot.

"This old post ain't square," complained Theodore.

"Just as square for you as 'tis for me." Bobby shook the marbles won in a muddy hand.

Then, with a shout, he dove forward. The marble that had lain upon the ground was gone, and the boy who had snatched it up and ran turned to call back derisively,

"Fangrabbin's day!"

"Just you wait!" threatened Bobby vaguely, his voice shrill with impotent anger.

Theodore, waiting to play with his own marble safe in his hand, grinned.

"Friday's fangrabbin's day. What you howlin' about?"

"Huh, nobody but muckers fangrab."

Theodore ignored this.

"Ain't you goin' to play? The bell 'll ring in a minute."

. Bobby tossed down another marble without thought as to whether or not it was one of his favorites. His interest in the game was overshadowed by a sense of injury.

"Some day, when I get bigger, I'm goin' to lick Joe Deemish."

Theodore, who had played and won, led off, bouncing his marble in restored confidence. Bobby moved slowly into shooting-position.

"Bet you, you and me together could lick him now."

"Maybe so." There was no conviction in Theodore's voice.

JOE DEEMISH, who had fangrabbed the marble, sixteen and large for his age, was the bully of the school; while Theodore was not fourteen and Bobby but little over twelve. It was Joe and a few of the older boys of his type who kept alive the rule that upon Friday, called "fangrabbin's day," it was permissible to snatch unguarded marbles from the ground.

"Hurry up! Shoot!" But the bell for the afternoon school-session rang out just as the younger boy drew back his hand to play. Ordinarily he would have played until the last tap, but now he pocketed his marble at the first stroke of the bell.

"If we could get him down, 'twould be easy."

"What you talkin' about?"

"Joe Deemish."

"Huh! Ain't—" Theodore broke off at sudden memory of injuries he had suffered at the same ruthless hand. "Maybe we could;" he said, not hopelessly.

"I bet you, if we can catch him alone—" Bobby's chubby face was puckered in a frown, and the unfinished sentence expressed with ample completeness the understanding that moved them vaguely.

Neither could have defined the thing they felt—that Joe Deemish's bluster fed upon the plaudits of the crowd, that the soul that animated his big body was not of the stuff that strives and endures alone.

"He never does nothin' when the crowd ain't round," mused Theodore.

They walked together to the entrance-hall, and here their ways diverged to different rooms. Theodore was entering his room when Joe Deemish chalked a wavering circle upon his back.

At the close of school, the boys met again. Theodore edged out of the throng at the exit and moved toward the back yard.

"Where you goin'?" called Bobby.

"Ain't you goin' to give me a chance to get even?" A sense of injury in Theodore's heart was swelling to embrace all mankind.

"Thought we was goin' down to the river?"

"Huh! And you got six of my miggles yet."

For a moment, Bobby stood undecided, and then, rapidly, the contents of his pockets were tumbling into his cap as dexterously he searched out the six identical marbles he had won.

"Shucks, The'dore! I don't want to keep your miggles."

Theodore scowled at the proffered return, but made no move to accept it.

"Joe Deemish chalked my back goin' in, and old Towser gave me heck when I went up to speak my piece, 'cause the bunch laughed." His face flushed at the memory.

"Some day we'll lick that mucker," growled Bobby in instant sympathy.

Theodore's gloom lightened.

"Aw, keep your miggs! I ain't a baby. Let's go down to the river."

Bobby thrust the marbles into his pocket.

"Sure! We can play miggles any old time."

They crossed the park to Main Street and loitered through the business center, stopping at every display-window, lingering particularly beside the great leather-covered model of a shoe, standing upon its pedestal at the entrance to Snell's shoe store.

The fact that this shoe had stood there ever since they could remember—had, in fact, so stood before they were born—in no wise dulled their interest. Unless upon some desperate hurry bent, the impelling force no less than a fire or a street-parade, they must stop and examine this great shoe. No other object along the familiar street so intrigued their imaginations. Who had made it, and how? How large would a man be who could wear it?

They had grown beyond a belief in giants, save those of the circus variety, yet that shoe roused in each a train of half-credulous speculation neither would have admitted to the other. That shoe was real—they never suspected the wooden framework inside. It was a regular shoe, only larger than a shoe ever was before. But a shoe just naturally presupposes a wearer. Was there ever a man big enough to wear that shoe? Was there such a one now? In Africa or New Zealand, perhaps—equally vague realms of mystery. How could they overcome such a man? Once, fresh from reading of Gulliver and the Lilliputians, they had openly speculated upon their ability to overcome such a one, and agreed, if they came upon him asleep and had some rope and their guns along, that they could capture or kill him.

But they did not speak of this any more. The musings sight or thought of the shoe stirred were now of the guarded secrets of each boyish heart. Now they shared only in their open interest in the shoe itself. But time and again each had pictured a man who could wear that shoe—a man fierce and wild in proportion to his vast size, and each had repeatedly circumvented, captured and destroyed that giant. Boyish fancies; but slaying dream-giants may be wonderful practise for real battles to come.

More reluctantly than usual, perhaps because some vague application of old fancies was impinging upon their consciousness, they drifted past the great shoe.

"Joe Deemish is the meanest boy in town." Theodore finally broke the silence.

"Big stiff!" chorused Bobby.

"The fellers is all scart of him."

"We ain't afraid—only, he's too big," qualified Bobby.

"He can chuck a ball home from anywhere's in the outfield," gloomed Theodore.

"Johnny White bluffed him once—'member?"

"Johnny's little, but he's a lot older than us. Bet he's older than Joe."

"Just the same, it proves he's a big stiff," insisted Bobby.

And then they fell silent, hurrying on to the river.

UNDER leaden skies and through an inch or more of snow, the boys tramped to school Monday morning.

"Gee! It keeps up fierce," grumbled Bobby. "Can't play marbles in the snow, and there ain't 'nuff of it to build a fort and have a snow-fight."

"Saw a robin in our yard this morning, and here it keeps up this old slush." Theodore was as gloomy as the day.

Half-heartedly, Bobby tossed a snowball at the great shoe they were approaching.

"Gee, The'dore! Don't you wish there was giants to fight now?"

Theodore's face lighted with interest.

"My dad said once, there was always giants. Guess he was kiddin'."

In the town park that fronted the school stood a round pagodalike structure, called "The Band-stand." Here the band played upon Saturday evenings in the summer, and here, in times of political ferment, when some orator appeared whose popularity threatened to overtax the capacity of the opera-house, was the rostrum for the open-air meeting.

Huddled in the scant lee of this edifice, Bobby and Theodore came upon a dozen of the smaller boys. At the first glimpse of the little crowd, sensing something that might mean a game, they had hurried forward. But as they drew near, there was no sign of merriment. A ring of flushed, worried faces, surrounded them.

"What's the matter with you kids?"

A babble of voices answered.

"Why don't you peg him back?"

"Huh! Can't none of us throw as far as Joe Deemish!" cried one.

" 'Sides, he's got a pile of soakers all made up," explained another.

"The big mucker!" stormed Bobby.

But Theodore was considering the situation. In front of the schoolhouse, beyond reach of any thrown missile but in plain view, lounged Joe Deemish, and piled on the steps at his side was a pyramid of snowballs.

"Did any of the other big fellers plug at you?" asked Theodore.

"No. Only Joe The rest was just laughin'."

"Suppose maybe he thinks he can keep us out here till the bell rings an' make us late," worried one.

"Say, you kids; make a lot of snowballs! Hustle! Squeeze 'em hard—make soakers!" Theodore had taken charge.

With a shout, the crowd went to work. No one thought to question. They who had been leaderless now had a leader, and that fact was sufficient. The fact that Theodore had stepped forward with decision set him apart. He was as busy as the rest, and in front of each boy a mound of snowballs was growing.

"Take your time and make 'em hard," he cautioned. "Make as many as you can carry. We're goin' to chase Joe Deemish out of there."

"We can't!" It was a chorus of protest.

"Can if you ain't babies," said Theodore.

" 'Course we can!" Bobby's eyes were glistening, and he was molding snowballs with tireless dexterity.

"Any fellow that's a calf can stay out."

Not a boy dropped his ammunition or drew back.

Theodore's glance traveled from boy to boy. Something strange, thrilling and vastly comforting was stirring in his heart.

"Now, listen, you kids; we'll spread out in a line, keep even and six or seven feet apart. Don't you chuck a snowball till I yell. We're goin' to get up close. Makes no difference if you get hit; don't you peg back till I tell you. He can't fling at only one at a time, and when we get close, we'll give him heck."

"Come on!" shrilled Bobby, darting ahead.

"Get back into line!" ordered Theodore. Bobby hesitated. This was not like Theodore, and he objected to being ordered about. "Didn't I tell you we was goin' to keep in line?" Theodore faced his chum with uncompromising firmness.

"All right." Bobby was puzzled, but obedient to this sudden, new authority.

"Don't run; walk up steady."

Slowly the battle-line moved forward. Now and again, as it drew perilously near the circle of Joe Deemish's longer range, it showed a tendency to sag back, and where Bobby walked it was inclined to bulge outward; but Theodore's firm, "Keep even," steadied them.

WHEN the battle began, there was a sizable gallery of boys and girls drawn discreetly back at either side of the point where Joe Deemish stood with his ammunition piled upon the steps. The orderly, determined advance of the smaller boys had attracted attention. From the few who had watched Joe Deemish as he drove back single boys as, all unsuspecting, they came within range of his stinging delivery, others had gathered about until fully half the school was watching in amusement that was changing into real interest. The steadily advancing line that now drew in at the ends to converge in a half-circle was plainly in dead earnest.

"They're gritty little kids. Just watch them." It was the biggest boy in school speaking to a girl at his side.

Joe Deemish threw the first snowball, and it fell short. And, as it drew nearer, he bombarded the line with commendable accuracy. But he was tiring himself at long range with slight result. Then, as the line drew steadily on within the distance at which his balls might have inflicted considerable damage, he grew wild and uncertain in his aim, hesitant at choice of target.

Steadily they came, their eyes more intent upon Theodore than upon the boy they had once so feared. The steady advance disconcerted Deemish.

"Why don't you throw 'em?" he yelled.

"Wait," cautioned Theodore quietly.

A nervous girl giggled, and a laugh ran through the crowd of spectators.

They were well within the distance the weakest arm in the line could cover before Theodore gave the word to throw.

"Now!" he cried. "Give it to him!"

Well-packed snowballs, hard almost as ice, impelled by the sense of many injuries, thudded upon the boy at the steps.

Frantically he fought back, grabbing his own and throwing without aim, often without sense of direction.

"Don't get too close! Make 'em count!" shouted Theodore. He had thrown the last of the snowballs he had carried, and now he was scooping up snow from the ground and manufacturing his ammunition as he fought and directed the attack.

But Joe Deemish had enough. The hail of balls thudding upon him at close range stung and bruised. With an inarticulate cry of rage, he darted up the steps to the shelter of the hallway.

"Some kids!" cried the biggest boy gleefully. The watchers gave a scattered cheer and melted away, and in the road the little group of jubilant boys gathered round Theodore.

It was unbelievable good fortune. For a time they all talked at once in voices shrill with excitement. And then, without apparent cause, the clatter died down and joy gave place to worry upon the heated faces.

Bobby voiced the common thought as he drew aside with Theodore.

"Gee! Joe Deemish will have it in for us for fair now."

The Theodore of a few moments before was gone and remained only a worried, frightened boy.

"I suppose so," he admitted drearily. "Guess, 'twas a fool play."

Bobby was shivering nervously.

"Gee! It's gettin' cold."

They walked up and down in increasing discomfort. Inside the building was warmth, but perhaps inside that door lurked Joe Deemish.

The school-bell rang, but they lingered outside, cold and miserable, until the last peal was dying away. Then, as they turned to enter, Joe Deemish came down the steps.

For a moment they were too startled to move, and as they stood frozen with terror, he passed them without a word. They roused to stare incredulously after him as he hurried across the park. They had glimpsed a swollen face and one baleful, purpling eye.

"Did you see?" gasped Bobby. "He's all bunged up!" They bounded forward up the steps into the building.

IT WAS a week later before Joe Deemish returned to school, and then more persistently than ever he went upon his blustering, bullying way.

Most of the smaller lads were cowed by Joe's malignity, but not Theodore and Bobby. Theirs had never again been the degradation of such fear as swept them at the end of that snowball fight. In fact, they feared him less than before. The glimpse of his battered face as he rushed down the steps had stripped away the glamour of invulnerability and skill that attached to his size. They had done that to him, and not a scar or a mark had he been able to inflict upon any of them.

No; they were not afraid of him. He was simply bigger than they cared to tackle until they could choose their own time and place was the substance of their argument upon various occasions. Age and strength were not the deterrent—they felt sure of this—although his physical equipment made the task hopeless for one and the issue doubtful for two.

They assured each other that they waited for opportunity. But each knew in his heart that he dreaded the unknown that menaced in the bulk of his enemy. Shrinking from the test of conflict behind the excuse, lack of opportunity, is not exclusively a boyish trait. Fear of the giant Difficulty is upon us all.

They did not understand it so; but they were not waiting for opportunity but for impulse, which was stronger than hesitation, to grasp it.

It was a season when "winter lingered in the lap of spring." Gloomy day followed upon gloomy day, and the occasional rifts of sunshine pierced through between alternating rain and flurries of snow. Existence was becoming a burden, the only surcease in thought of the Easter vacation drawing near. At times, even this failed of comfort, and black doubt hung over them.

"Suppose it should be nasty all through vacation?"

"Gosh!" exclaimed Theodore, momentarily dumfounded at the thought. And then he rallied. "It can't keep this way. My dad says it's goin' to be a hot summer."

But their gloomy forebodings were dispelled when the weather changed and day by day, in spite of frequent showers, it grew steadily warmer. Over the brick schoolhouse hung an air of expectancy that was part of the spirit of spring. One sensed a different quality in the atmosphere of rejoicing that permeated the place—an exhilaration that was lacking at other seasons. At the approach of the summer vacation, weariness would stir at the prospect of release, but at Easter, weariness forgotten, its effects dissipated, the spirit of youth reached to grasp the promise of spring.

And the ceremonies, too, upon the last day of school were different—different in spirit as a sermon and a dance of dryads. Here was no valediction, but a greeting, not the ending but the beginning.

"Always more fun the last day before Easter vacation than at commencement," said Theodore, as he and Bobby in the splendor of new spring suits hurried back to the closing exercises of the final session.

"Ain't a lot of fussy folks round, and a lot of talkin'. Just some pieces and bully singin'," said Bobby.

"And they let you out quick," supplemented Theodore.

"You bet yeh! For two whole weeks!"

From every direction, pupils in spring array were converging upon the park. When the ground was dry, practically all followed the park paths to the center and crossed the street opposite the school-entrance. But when muddy, the greater number took the longer way and followed the sidewalk round the park. To-day, in the care begotten by best clothes, but few followed the paths. But Bobby and Theodore always went through the park, and now they were half-way across before it occurred to either that upon this special occasion, and with new suits, they should keep their shoes clean.

"We'll get our shoes muddy crossin'," said Theodore, suddenly stopping.

"It ain't bad, 'cept a puddle at the edge that we can hop over." The longest way round never appealed to Bobby.

"Bet we get all muddy," grumbled Theodore. But other boys were going their way, and he went on.

The park was shaded by great maples, and neither saw the form that lurked behind a tree at the end of the path. As Bobby had said, there was a puddle to hop across, but the rest of the way was very muddy.

They stood at the edge of the roadway looking for the best places to spring across the wettest part to the footprints of those who had gone before.

"'Tain't bad!" cried Bobby. "Come on!"

They were but a few feet apart when they jumped, and each landed in the track he had chosen; but before they had taken a step forward, a warning cry rang behind them:

"Watch out!"

Startled, they turned quickly, and at the same instant a long board splashed to the ground between them, and Joe Deemish stood with his foot upon its farther end.

He had held the board upright, the end resting against one foot at the edge of the puddle, the other foot raised high, pressing against the board as he held it with his hands before releasing it and lunging forward to add his weight to the force of its fall. Water and mud flew from the impact in diverging waves that plastered and drenched both boys.

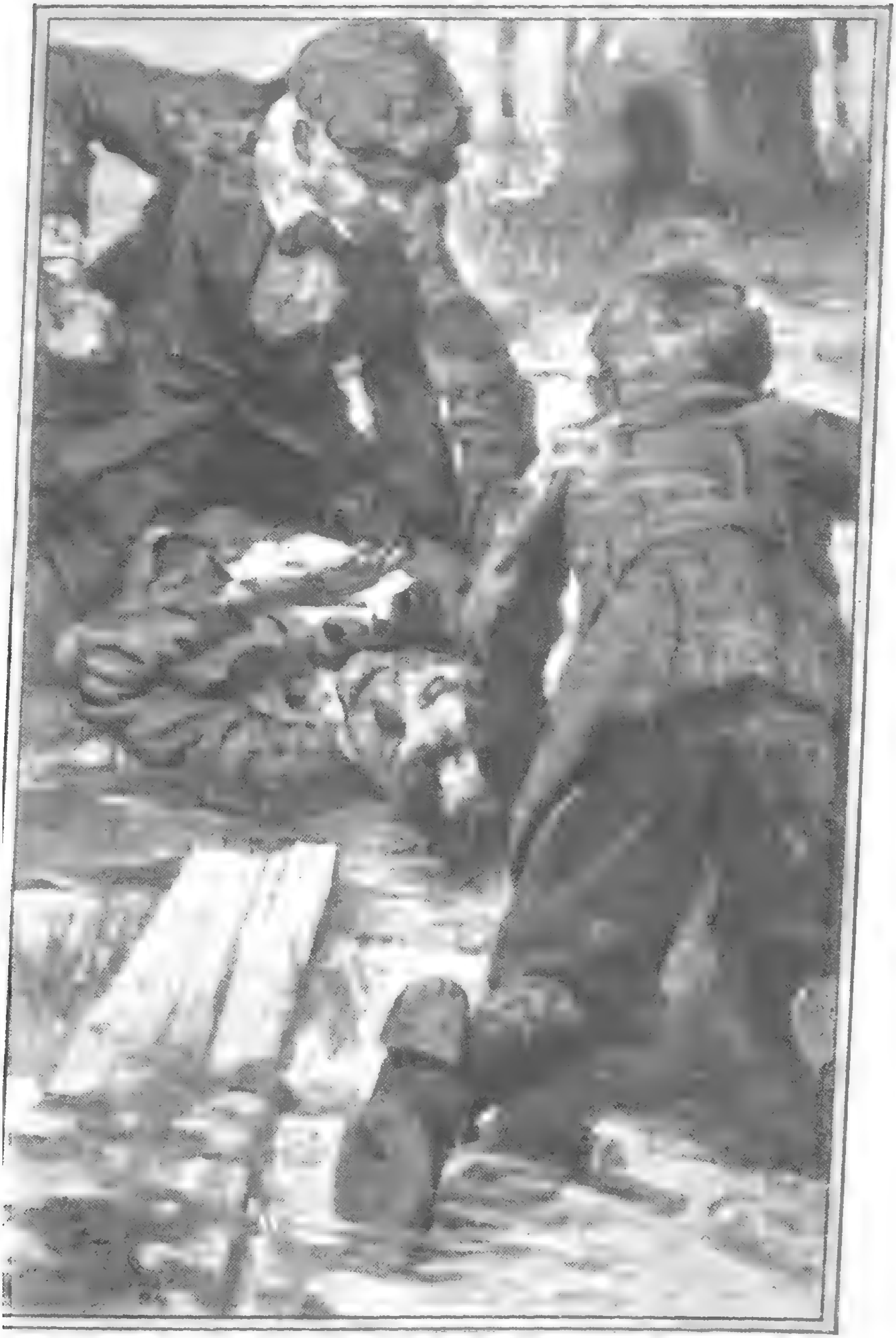
IN THE instant that he stood frozen in his tracks, the whole meaning of the catastrophe that had overwhelmed them flashed upon Bobby. Joe Deemish had waited for them in the assurance that they would return dressed in their best and pass this way. Then, as he had snapped down the board, he had shouted a warning there was no time to heed. But because he had so called, he would claim that he was placing the board for them to walk upon. He had ruined their clothes, humiliated them in sight of almost the whole school, robbed them of their part in the joyous exercises to follow, and so planned it all that they would be open to the charge of contributory negligence or perhaps of the deliberate attempt to block him in doing a graceful act.

The sense of it all, multiplied, magnified, hideous, flashed upon the boy in the second that he stood, seemingly stunned. Then all the world went red save one dim, formless point. And almost quicker than the board had fallen its length, with no thought of consequences or plan, obeying the blind impulse to strike and rend and tear, he darted toward that single tangible spot.

Reckoning nothing of mud, conscious of nothing but the overwhelming demand for vengeance, Bobby rushed, and one flying fist landed in the pit of the larger boy's stomach.

With a gasp, Joe Deemish staggered forward, bent nearly double with the pain of that wild blow, and instantly Bobby's hard little fingers were clutched in the thatch of his hair.

With a shout, Theodore landed with his knees upon the staggering boy's back, and at the force of this and the pull of Bobby's hands, Joe stumbled forward, to fall flat upon his face in the muddy pool.



Again they were upon him, struggling at the edge of the puddle. This time, Joe failed to raise their weight, and rolled into the deeper water.

Theodore, clinging relentlessly, went down with him, his added weight half burying Deemish in the mud, and Bobby threw himself back upon the partially submerged head.

Half strangled, Joe struggled fiercely, raising himself to his knees against the piled weight of both boys. But, gasping and blinded by the mud, his lashing fists for the most part threshed the air while the two pommeled him mercilessly.

The pool was threshed and trampled to a frothy paste. Time and again Joe threw them off, struggling to regain his feet, and once he succeeded and for a moment stood erect, desperately striving to clear his eyes.

But Bobby wrapped his arms round his legs below the knees, and Theodore swarmed upon his back, with one hand free, jerking short-arm punches to neck and jaw, the fingers of the other hand hooked across his nose, and again Deemish went down.

Bobby was crying as he fought, with great, gasping sobs.

Theodore, save for his labored breathing, fought silently, and Joe Deemish, who, in the beginning, had snarled and cursed, now had no breath left.

Again they were upon him, struggling at the edge of the puddle. This time, Joe failed to raise their weight and, blindly essaying to roll clear, rolled into the deeper water, and, scrambling after, pounding him into the mud, they crowded him down, strangling him.

Then something seized and lifted the boys on top, and the biggest boy in school, standing in the mud to his shoe-tops, held them squirming in either hand.

'Let up, you tiger cats! Do you want to drown him?"

Weakly Joe Deemish crawled away to sit gasping and choking at the edge of the park, his face streaked with blood and mud.

Standing the two upon their feet with a last admonishing jerk, the biggest boy in school waded over to Deemish.

"You got what was coming to you, young fellow," he said. "Now, you're going to lay off these kids or I'll lick you plenty myself."

"You needn't. We can do it again," gasped Bobby, gulping back the sobs that still choked him.

"We can do it every day," said Theodore.

The biggest boy in school grinned upon them with friendly, admiring eyes.

"I won't touch 'em again," promised Deemish, and, crushed and broken, he fell to sobbing.

"You bet you won't!" said the biggest boy.

Plastered with mud from head to foot, for the first time conscious of many bruises but filled with deep exultation, Bobby and Theodore turned away. There would be no last-day program for them this time.

"Let's go over to my house to clean up. We can sneak through the lane, and there won't many see us," suggested Bobby.

"Our suits are ruined," groaned Theodore.

"No, they ain't. It's only clean mud. We can scrape most of it off, and the rest will dry and come off," said Bobby, more hopefully than he felt, now that he had opportunity to appraise the damage in degree. "Come on; you can put on some old duds of mine and mom'll help us."

IT WAS a sorry-looking pair of boys who found their way into the kitchen of Bobby's home a few minutes later. At his mother's cry of dismay, his father hurried in from another room.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

"Joe Deemish—" began Bobby.

With an inarticulate growl, the father turned hurriedly back.

"What are you going to do, John?" called the mother.

"I'm going to see Tom Deemish about that dratted boy of his!"

"Better wait, dad." Bobby grinned crookedly through puffed and swollen lips. "Old Deemish's li'ble to come over here. Me and The'dore licked Joe."

"That great boy?" exclaimed his mother incredulously.

"Yep," said Bobby.

For a moment his mother stared at him with troubled eyes. It was time for admonition. Her boy must not grow up to be a rough, fighting man. Her boy must—

The mother's lips trembled and her eyes grew moist as she watched the battered face with its strange look of exultation.

"You should say 'Theodore and I,'" she said gently, by way of reproof.

The next story of the "Little Journeys Back Home" series, "The Best Fun Yet," will appear in December EVERYBODY'S—out November 15th.

If You Enjoy Adventure, You'll Find It Here

The Witch *of* Gondar

Sevier, Free of His Foolhardy Escapade, Makes His Way into the Interior of Abyssinia and Finds Something Besides Romantic Adventure on Which to Test His Mettle

By William Ashley Anderson

Illustrations by J. M. Clement

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

THE treachery of the woman who, a moment before, had sought to destroy every memory of duty, every realization of the crowding perils of the adventure into which Cohusac had lured him, acted upon Sevier with the effect of a blow. The tenderness that had overwhelmed him turned into horror and aversion. He freed himself, thrust her away, vaulted the parapet and dropped into the alley deep in shadow, black as the night itself.

He found Cohusac struggling to his feet. He lifted the crippled Frenchman to his shoulder, and, with the bazaar in full cry behind and all about him, made for safety. Even as he went, he heard a dull thud near by, looked about and saw a feathery Somali spear quivering in the road.

Yet, for all the uproar, escape was easy. In ten minutes he was in his quarters in the Crater. Cohusac seemed to have fainted. Sevier assured himself, however, that he was all right, and then forgot him.

The narrowness of his own escape appalled him. Not his own, so much; the point was that great issues were in his keeping. Within an hour he was to leave Aden—he, the secret agent of the British government. He knew what only a very few of the higher British officials did know—that the nominal ruler of Abyssinia, the degenerate Prince Lidj Yassou, had become apostate and renounced the ancient Christianity of his empire for Islam. Should he find support and become the leader of a *jehad*, a holy war, the German object in bringing Turkey in against the Allies would be achieved; an Abyssinian army might sweep through the Sudan, overrun Egypt, block the Suez Canal.

He was leaving Aden for the interior of Abyssinia, not so much with plans as with intentions and objectives. Better than any European, as he himself knew, he was equipped to deal with the problems certain to arise. He knew the politics of the situation, with the strange mixture of racial and religious issues involved. An American, known only as a trader, he could move without rousing suspicion; his connection with the British service was known to few.

He had supposed that knowledge to be confined to friends. Now he was less certain. Had the woman who had, defying all law and custom, shown herself to him unveiled as he gazed across at Abu Kahlil's house intended only to lure him into a trap? Had Cohusac, that curious, crippled

Frenchman, who had still, in his twisted body, the soul and spirit of the adventurer the war had destroyed, played into her hands, all innocence, when he pretended to be Sevier and so began the jest that had ended in Sevier's desperate rush to his rescue?

No matter. He had to deal with facts. He was clear of Abu Kahlil's house, of the beautiful woman calling herself Miriam, who had, for that one mad moment, made him forget his duty with the lure of her lips. What remained was the need for instant action. He had laid his plans with Colonel Whittington, made his arrangements with the great Jewish merchant, Juda bin Ismael.

Well might he be ashamed of himself for having permitted any consideration to sway him from the line of duty. His self-confidence was touched. It made him less ready to blame others for the misadventure.

Nevertheless, he glanced angrily at Cohusac, who had suffered no injuries greater than the shock of the fall. All at once he realized that the Frenchman was shamming unconsciousness. The childish innocence of his face seemed so utterly at variance with the whimsical devilishness of the spirit it masked that Sevier studied the delicate features more closely. Under his scrutiny the lips began to quiver, the eyelids fluttered, then irresistibly opened and looked at Sevier with such an impish expression that the last trace of anger seemed to evaporate. Sevier burst into exasperated laughter.

Cohusac grimaced, then stretched himself gingerly, grunting and making sharp exclamations as he discovered his hurts and felt anew his chronic aches and pains. At last he said aloud, between ejaculations of pain:

"O face of pearl! O body of a houri, warm and fragrant from your couch in paradise! O night of dreams! May Allah blast you and your tribe! God forgive me, Dick, my good old fellow, if you don't feel inclined to. Did you see her, though? Was I not right? Give me a cigarette, please, or I'll die. What a glorious creature, eh? A houri and a jinnee—an angel and a little devil! Wau! She would have killed me when she found it was not you who sang the serenade——"

"Oh, *bass!*" grunted Sevier, throwing him his cigarette-case.

"It is true! It is true!" exclaimed Cohusac.

Without replying, Sevier went to the door of his sleeping-quarters and called his assistant. Presently there was a response, and the assistant began to stir out of bed. Sevier came back to the center of the room, puffing thoughtfully at a cigarette. He called the slumbering house-boy.

"My good fellow," protested Cohusac mildly, "don't have me thrown over any more parapets. It's a kind of bouncing I don't like——"

"For my part," said Sevier suddenly, "I'm leaving for Djibouti within half an hour. I like your sense of humor; but for your own good I'd like to remind you that one of those *hamals* who went off the roof didn't seem to get up again. He may be dead. I couldn't stop to find out."

A cloud swept Cohusac's face—a cloud that was quickly dispelled by a radiant smile and a shrug of indifference.

"I refuse to believe it. However, I shall lie low for several days. Then, perhaps, I shall see the lady again. I owe her a party-call—not?"

AT THIS moment, Talmadge, the assistant, entered the apartment. He was a weary-looking individual who seemed to have slept with his glasses fixed fast on his nose. He was slightly bald, but the rest of his flaxen hair was fluffy and disheveled. He was thoroughly conversant with all the details of the cotton trade, and little else.

Sevier explained to him tersely that, an opportunity having presented itself, he had decided to leave immediately for Djibouti. He drew up brief memoranda of essentials, gave some general directions, and referred him to Juda bin Ismael and the bank in case of emergency. This business concluded, he changed into a traveling suit of shot-khaki sola cloth which the house-boy laid out for him.

"Is there petrol in the motor-cycle?" he asked.

"Enough to get to the Point."

"It's all I want. I'll leave it at the club. You can get it in the morning. If everything is clear, then I'm off."

"What about clothes?" asked Talmadge, shaking hands dubiously

"Hassan left a bag at the club this afternoon. Good-by, Cohusac. I would advise not so much of your '*Dus ya lellal* Oh, step, my love!' and a little more watching of your own step."

Cohusac clasped his friend's hand in both his, and looking at him with an enigmatical expression, said:

"*Au revoir*, Dick. If my foots lips, I expect you'll see me soon. Or, well, perhaps good-by——"

Sevier ran down the dark stairs, pushed out the heavy motor-cycle and in another minute, with a series of loud staccato coughs from the exhaust, disappeared round the corner.

At the club he left the motor-cycle. He ran to the Abkari landing and jumped into a bumboat that had been waiting for him. The Somali oarsmen dipped their blades, swung their weight against the long sweeps, and the boat surged through the silent waters streaked with the rising mists of early dawn.

He was conscious of the heavy, solemn beating of his heart; he was vaguely aware of four pair of eyes staring curiously at him; he realized indifferently that he seemed to be drifting through a gray void.

The situation suggested to him the great security that the intricate organization of the British empire provided in all parts of the world. He thought of other nights in other places. The sight of the lean black Somalis recalled the Chinese boatmen in the bay at Hongkong, the Sikh policeman there carefully noting down the license-number of his sampan, and the feeling of complete security inspired by the knowledge that British courts and the headsman guaranteed his safety.

All at once he became uneasy The Somalis had almost ceased to row. They were barely paddling with their oars. The boat was lurching on a gentle swell, and the boatmen bent slightly forward, staring at him in fascinated silence. Slipping his hand into his pocket, he slowly drew out his revolver. Then, actuated by an instinct acquired in many desperate encounters, he turned his head swiftly and looked into the water behind him. His heart bounded.

At the instant he turned, a brown, wet body, one hand clutching the gunwale by the rudder-post, the other grasping a keen jambeer poised ready for a deadly blow into the kidneys, was heaving itself out of the water preparatory to the stroke. The features were dimmed by a heavy, glossy black beard, but the eyebrows were drawn down with murderous concentration, and the eyes seemed to glitter fanatically.

Sevier struck with his revolver at the face turned up to him. The boat lurched, and the blow glanced on the swimmer's shoulder. Nevertheless, it landed with such force that the Arab gave a grunt of agony, lost his grip of the gunwale, sank in a swirl of phosphorescent water and was lost in the darkness.

Sevier instantly turned his revolver on the boatmen, and, rising to his feet, shouted:

"Ahoy! *Vixen*, ahoy!"

An answering hail came from near at hand.

At the same moment, as though echoing his cry, there came faintly but clearly across the water, already graying in the indefinite gloom of dawn, the sound of the muezzin. Resounding from the cindery slopes, the voice of the dead-eyed priest of Mohammed, calling from his slender minaret, roused the faithful to prayer:

Allah is great and to be glorified!
There is but one Allah—
There is but one Allah—
And His prophet is Mohammed!
Allah is great and to be glorified!

THE *Vixen* landed Sevier in Djibouti, the port of French Somaliland and the *entrepôt* of Abyssinia, before noon. He went ashore as a civilian trader without attracting undue attention and proceeded immediately to the Continental, where he took up his quarters until he could devise a means of getting on to Dire Daoua, the station where it would be necessary for him to leave the railroad to proceed by horse to Harrar, the capital of the province of Harrar. Here Lidj Yassou had been reported stirring up the Somalis and forming an alliance with them.

He did not consider it necessary to make any official calls, since it seemed obvious no direct help could be given him in his official capacity that he was not equally capable of securing for himself as a civilian. Furthermore, the attempt to kill him in the bay at Aden convinced him that his true character had at last been discovered there by enemies. Their desperate enmity made it increasingly necessary for him to reach his destination with secrecy and despatch.

The news that had greeted him upon his arrival, however, was almost disastrous. He learned that the meter-gage railway connecting Djibouti with the hinterland and the highlands of Abyssinia had been cut by the warring tribesmen of Danakil, and no communication whatever could now be secured with the interior. Nothing was known definitely about conditions outside a short radius of Djibouti itself. The wildest rumours were afloat, and the scorching town, sprawled upon its spit of sand, was crowded with refugees of every type.

The French authorities had taken every precaution to safeguard the town from an attack either by the advance of an Abyssinian army or sporadic raids by the uncontrolled desert tribesmen. British and French war-ships lay in the roads with guns uncased; defenses had been hastily constructed, cutting off the town from the interior, and all men capable of bearing arms had been called to serve.

Sevier immediately tested every means of communication across Somaliland to Abyssinia, but was forced at last to the conclusion that there was no possible way of advancing except by rail. Telegraphic communication could only be established with the capital of Abyssinia, Addis Abeba, by way of Egypt and the Soudan, and this was extremely slow and uncertain. It was about two hundred miles by the line of the railroad to Dire Daoua, and then thirty-five miles by country road to Harrar. Barren mountains and blazing waterless stretches lay between the coast and these upland towns. Without employing the railroad, this stretch could not be crossed except by mules, pack-horses or camels, through country infested with actively hostile savages. Unmolested, such a trip would require two weeks to accomplish. Under present conditions, it was hopeless to consider it.

Sevier had no alternative, therefore, but to gather all the information possible and to seek an opportunity to advance by rail. He feared that if Lidj Yassou had already affected an alliance with the Somalis and won the support of Ras Taffari in Dire Daoua, his arrival would be too late.

Nevertheless, he stubbornly preserved the hope that the old *rases* at the capital, supported by the ministers of the Allied legations, would make a struggle to preserve the integrity of the ancient Christian empire, and that young Ras Taffari at Dire Daoua might give them his support rather than submit to the apostate prince. With this hope before him, he determined to reach Harrar at all costs.

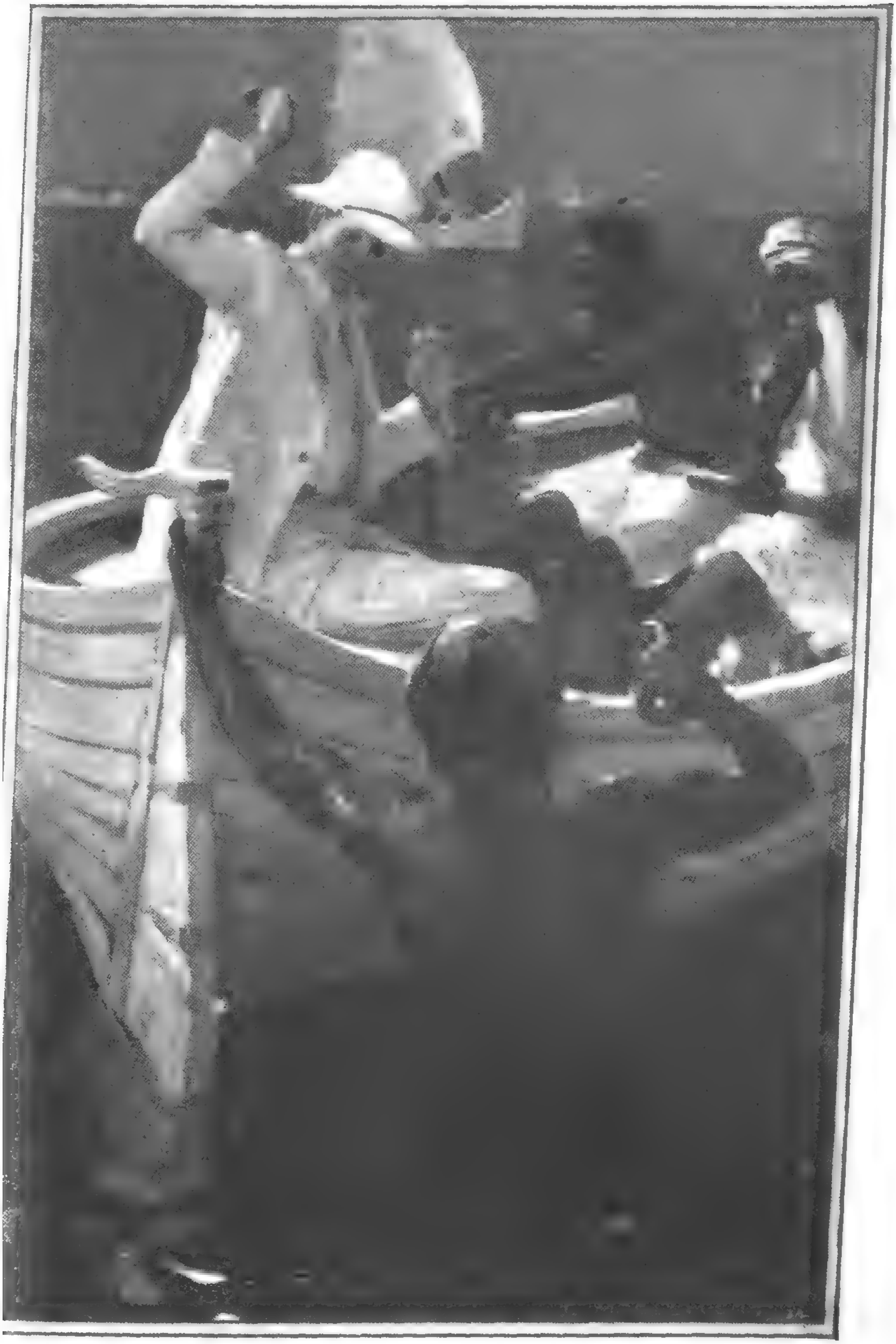
TWO days passed in exasperating waiting. Despatches from Aden advised him that Colonel Whittington had not yet been able to establish communication through Egypt. In the mean time, a passenger-ship from Aden arrived, adding another element of danger.

Sevier had about reached the conclusion that the situation was sufficiently critical for him to call on the French governor and reveal his identity. He could, if necessary, attempt to get through with a locomotive, and, if he found bridges or culverts destroyed, continue by hand-car. The element of personal danger he had to ignore.

With these thoughts passing through his mind, he sat at an iron-topped table sipping a *sirop* and looking across the Place Menilek, blazing painfully and depressingly under the afternoon sun. The heat poured like hot water through the tarpaulin roof of the Café Continental, and the few stiff, dusty palms along the curb rattled unpleasantly in the hot wind.

He studied the polyglot crowd of evacuees, wondering if among them there were any whom he might have reason to fear or from whom he might obtain reliable information. They were principally Greeks, Armenians, Italians, Abyssinians and Arabs. The Frenchmen, with their glossy hair and white skins, seemed to represent the highest point of culture, and some haughty Somalis, graceful but self-conscious, threading their way cautiously among the tables, the lowest. At ordinary times the hotel would have been a desolate and uninviting refuge, but now that it was animated by the presence of the boastful and vociferous Levantines telling of their adventures when they fled from their posts, Sevier found that the scene did not lack interest.

As his roving eyes wandered among these people with casual interest, his attention was suddenly drawn to a woman sitting at a table, her thin brows drawn together in



rown, wet body, one hand grasping a keen jambeer poised ready for a deadly blow, was heaving itself out of the water. Sevier struck with his revolver at the face turned up to him.

a slight frown. By her costume, she was Abyssinian.

Despite the oppressive heat, a long black-sateen mantle enveloped her, while her throat and head were covered with snowy white linen drawn about her face so that only her fine eyes and part of a clear forehead were exposed. Even these were shadowed incongruously by a broad-brimmed felt hat, a characteristic of the Abyssinian costume. Her creamy skin and large eyes, sometimes brooding and languorous, sometimes flashing with vivacity as a poignant thought seemed to stab through the veil, suggesting both Sappho and Salome, indicated a mixture that was not wholly Semitic and had in it probably an infusion of the Greek. She twisted a glass of rose sherbet nervously between her fingers. Otherwise, she gave little physical evidence of any inner perturbation. Once she raised her eyes and met Sevier's gaze fully. She looked at him frankly and with interest.

Knowing the promiscuous nature of an Abyssinian woman's affections, Sevier was surprised to find that this glance conveyed to him the impression of a spirit that was not soft and yielding but rather one that was dominant, passionate, strong to love and terrible to hate. Besides, he found something in the expression that was enigmatical. It attracted him strongly, yet it made him uneasy. He understood that her interest in him conveyed no flattery. There were others who also looked on him with curiosity, since he was the only Anglo-Saxon—the only English-speaking man—in the city, and the only American who had visited that shore since the beginning of the European war. To this fact alone he ascribed her interest. Fearing, therefore, that her expression might change to one of contempt if he returned her look too steadfastly, and despising the thought of sharing with the rest of that assemblage any open admiration of her, he turned his attention elsewhere.

AT A neighboring table, a party of Italian sailors was drinking and laughing uproariously. Several pert vendors of post-cards and cowries smirked about; but the point of attraction seemed to be in the center of the group. The sailors were looking inward, while one with raised glass marked time to a Neapolitan boat-song.

There was nothing exactly pretty about it here, nothing in the notes that was particularly sweet, melancholy or melodious. Nevertheless, amid the heat and uproar of this place of exile, it was not without its appeal.

Sevier saw that the singer was an Arab hunchback.

Holding on to the edge of the table to support his broken body, he beat time with his free hand while he sang in the sailors' tongue songs of their native land. The idea of an Arab hunchback, wan and melancholy of aspect, a scraggly mustache and ruffled goatee accentuating the long moroseness of his countenance, singing in guttural Italian songs of the Bay of Naples, of the Rialto, of Messina and of Rome, made the Europeans shout with mirth. They joined bibulously in the choruses, pressed drinks upon him and thrust cigarettes between his lips for occasional puffs. Though they poked him freely in the ribs with their fingers, they touched him gingerly upon the hump for luck.

The hunchback never smiled, yet took this treatment good-naturedly, knowing that upon his cheerfulness depended his bakshish. A huge Indian turban was piled upon his head, its foamy vastness emphasizing the diminutiveness of the frail body beneath it. He wore a long, dirty *kanza*, like a nightgown, open at the throat, disclosing his bony neck, and flapping about his ankles. Socks sagged down over a pair of broken tan shoes, laceless and large. Contrasting with this crude suggestion of the Occident was a long musical instrument somewhat resembling a lute, which he carried slung on one side of his twisted spine, and which he occasionally loosened, with a grimace, to play his own accompaniments.

His misfortune, looked upon as a concomitant of slyness, brought him at least the respect of Mussulmans, and assured him some degree of gentleness and charity from all.

All at once the sailor with the lifted glass was diverted from his sport by the approach of a sleek and comely Greek, one of those smooth, smiling creatures who perpetually carry an air of conscious superiority under their lifted eyebrows and seem to be as much beloved by women as they are despised by men.

Glancing over the crowded tables as though searching for some one, yet not aware that he was making some sort of sensation among his fellow evacuees, he suddenly discovered the fair Abyssinian. Instantly his air of indifference vanished. With an expression of eagerness he made his way directly to her table. The Abyssinian looked at him through half-closed eyes without betraying the slightest indication of her emotions. She nodded her head, however, and he sat down.

Sevier instantly jumped to a conclusion that seemed obvious in the circumstances. Recalling his own compunction at staring at her, he could not help feeling an irritating sense of dissatisfaction and disgust at the thought that the woman was the property of the Greek.

The sailors, attracted by the attitude of their comrade, shared this sentiment. With the frankness of men of the sea, however, they betrayed their feelings freely. Black eyes sparkled; glasses were banged on the table; self-elected spokesmen volunteered eloquent and profound observations, punctuated by pungent and facetious comments that finally penetrated the Greek's armor of conceit and forced the blood into his ears.

Unwilling to retire, now that the eyes of others were upon him, he fondled his mustache nervously. He spoke a few words in a low tone to the Abyssinian—so low, in fact, that no one else heard a sound. Only a close observer could have seen that under his uplifted hand his lips had moved. Sevier's attention at this moment was unaccountably drawn to the hunchback. He observed with astonishment that the Arab was gazing with the most intense concentration at the couple, his sharp features betraying an interest that was immeasurably keener than simple curiosity.

Sevier immediately transferred his gaze again to the Greek.

This gallant, however, was no longer whispering. He had at last been touched by the remarks of the sailors. Flashing threatening glances over his shoulder, he shifted his chair impatiently, bitterly cursing the fatigued waiter for lack of attention. At last, beyond himself with rage both at the attitude of the sailors and something that had passed unnoticed between the woman and himself, he uttered in a low voice a disgusting comment aimed at all Italians. The tones were not loud enough to reach the sailors. The comment was intended only to relieve the speaker's feelings, and perhaps to establish himself in the eyes of the woman.

Unfortunately for him, however, the words were caught clearly by a newcomer who entered the café at this moment.

This man promptly came to a startled halt, an expression of doubt and perplexity upon his cheerful countenance. Sevier recognized him as a locomotive-driver whom he had seen in the yard earlier in the day, an excellent mechanic, hard-working and endowed with a chronic cheerfulness. The driver paused for a moment uncertainly; then he leaned over and touched the Greek on the shoulder.

Instantly the latter whirled about and recognized the Italian. Without waiting to hear his question, he repeated the offensive remark defiantly.

THE next few minutes were crowded with action. Knives were drawn, tables overturned, chairs flung about, while women screamed and men shouted and grunted. No one was hurt, however, and when the mêlée simmered down, no evidence remained save Fanelli, the locomotive-driver, bursting with explanations and alternately relapsing into silence among the sailors, and the Greek, pale with excitement, at the other end of the café, absolutely voiceless with passion, his hair tousled, his eyes roving, his lips forming incoherent and passionate speeches.

The Abyssinian woman, sunk far in her chair, swathed so completely in her linen that even her eyes were half concealed, had not moved, but her eyes were turned upon the Greek, and under her silent and contemptuous scrutiny he seemed almost against his will to sink gradually into a moody silence.

In the brief mêlée, Sevier had had an opportunity to save the Italian driver from a knife-thrust that might have proved deadly. He had interposed himself simply enough, overthrowing the Italian's assailant with a leg-lock that had sent him spinning to the pavement. In the excitement the Italian had not missed this, though Sevier had promptly gone back to his own table to keep from being further embroiled.

Fanelli, therefore, soon left his compatriots and approached the American with expression of gratitude.

It was exactly what Sevier had hoped. When he had mixed in the quarrel it was on an impulse that prompted him to secure an ally whose cooperation would be based on simple friendship.

"If I can be of any use to you, sir," said the Italian bluntly, "I am your servant. My friends say they do not know you. You are a stranger, then? Well, everything is upset. Perhaps I can do something for you. Have you a room? Interpreters? Servants?"

Sevier invited him to be seated and ordered fresh drinks.

"I'm not exactly a stranger," he explained, "having been here twice before on business. The first time the railway only extended to Dire Daoua. The second time they had stretched it to Hawash, a hundred and fifty miles beyond. Now, I understand, it is in operation almost to Addis Abeba itself, five hundred miles from here."

"Yes, sir. That is to say, the railway tracks extend that distance. But there are no trains now, of course."

"Can nothing pass?"

"Well, we're not sure. They are so timid. A man just arrived half an hour ago from a way station almost eighty miles up without being molested. He came in a hand-car. He said the track had been destroyed in two places, one train wrecked and looted and the passengers gone, and the wires were all down."

"Yet he got through safely?"

"He was afraid. The devil was at his heels. Nothing could stop him."

"Nevertheless, if one man could get through alone, I don't see why a train couldn't be got through."

"Bah!" exclaimed the Italian, with an air of bravado. "If you want my opinion, I think it can be done. This trouble is only caused by the Dankalis and Somali tribesmen."

"How do you know that? How about the Abyssinians?"

"Not yet. The tribesmen are out of control—that's all. All the news trickles along the railway. I know. The trouble is due to the condition of affairs in Abyssinia, of course; but the Abyssinians are too busy to bother about the line between here and Dire Daoua just now. That is only my own opinion, you understand."

"Certainly. Would you take a train through?"

Fanelli suddenly became very thoughtful. He gulped unobtrusively. He looked at the American with a speculative eye. At length he said:

"If they gave me twenty rifles, I'd guarantee to run a train through. Yes—certainly."

"You know that the officials are anxious to open up the line, don't you?"

"Oh, but I'm not one to run about asking to have my throat cut. I'm making no free offers."

"Yet the company is very anxious to get these evacuees back to their posts, and the government wants to see the railway opened."

'The French government, sir. I am an Italian."

'And I am an American. I have a proposition. I must reach Dire Daoua. If you can persuade the company to let you take a train through—with a working gang to repair tracks, of course—so that I reach Dire Daoua by sunset to-morrow night, I will give you five thousand francs"

At first, the Italian did not seem to understand. He lowered his glass, placed both hands upon the table and looked at the American with an extremely attentive expression. Then, as the fixity of Sevier's eyes convinced him that he was in earnest, he slowly licked his lips, and his expression became slightly abstracted.

"First-class fare is only about ninety-eight francs, sir."

Sevier repeated slowly and clearly,

"Five thousand francs will be paid you in Dire Daoua to-morrow by the agent of Juda bin Ismael if you get me there by sunset. Listen," he added convincingly; "you know me for an American. You have heard something of American business methods. Well, the fact is this: My company has a large concession from the prince, Lidj Yassou. I'll be frank. We have discovered phosphate. I cannot tell you where. But it caused us great trouble and expense to obtain this concession. You, who know Abyssinia, can easily comprehend this. Well then; if I cannot secure Lidj Yassou's confirmation before it is too late, all our work must be done again——"

"But what if he becomes a Mussulman?"

"Ah, you have heard that?"

"It is a report this station-master has brought. There may be a war."

"That makes the matter urgent. When it is over, our claim is good. We can insist upon it. Do you not see? I confide in you because you have given me reason to believe I can trust you. Another man might hold me for any amount. If I do not reach Dire Daoua in time to see the prince, the whole business is finished."

"Five thousand francs," repeated Fanelli in a dazed voice. Then, suddenly animated with resolve as the conviction became real, he slapped his hand on the iron-topped table. "Sir," he exclaimed excitedly, "you can count on me! I'll go to the superintendent now and offer to take a train through immediately. I'll persuade them!"

"One thing more: If it becomes known that I have urged this—if any one learns of my particular interest, you get nothing. In other words, you have heard nothing of what I have just told you except as to reward. Your knowledge of the matter begins and ends when I pay you five thousand francs in Dire Daoua to-morrow evening. My word must be sufficient guarantee. You have nothing to lose."

"I could not doubt you, sir."

In an excess of enthusiasm, Fanelli walked off whistling, almost forgetting to nod to his friends at near-by tables.

When Sevier withdrew his gaze, he realized all at once that his conversation had been narrowly observed by both the melancholy hunchback and the fair Abyssinian. They were too far away, however, to have caught a single syllable amid the babble of voices at the other tables, and, as soon as they caught his eye, they looked away with an air of indifference. Nevertheless, this attention gave Sevier a feeling of uneasiness.

AT ABOUT nine o'clock the same evening, Sevier, having dined on shrimps, mutton and lentils, from which the careless servants, shuffling about in their bare feet, occasionally swept the clustering flies, sought a place once more by one of the tables to sip a cordial in the hope of removing the taste of the greasy food. As he sipped, he began to consider alternatives in the event of Fanelli's failing to convince the railway authorities that he could get through with a train to Dire Daoua.

He visualized an Abyssinian conquest of Egypt, a ruthless army marching up and down the Nile devastating everything before it, a horde sweeping over the colonies to the south, wiping them out as a bush fire flares up about an acacia and leaves it ashes. He saw the blood, the desolation, the inexpressible anguish that would follow in the train of a black conquest. The cloud of mystery that had suddenly fallen over the hinterland with the cutting of the railway line added to his uncertainty and fear.

He knew the efforts that the Allied representatives at Addis Abeba must be making, and he knew that the few British officials scattered over the vast territory that flanked Abyssinia's borders were brave and resourceful men; but they were few, and their efforts might be like trying to beat out flame with a poker. To fight a bush fire, another flame must be started.

"Sir," said a very well-satisfied voice, "if you sign this paper you will be at liberty to proceed by a relief train leaving at five o'clock to-morrow morning for Dire Daoua."

"Fanelli!" exclaimed Sevier. He lifted his head as though checking himself on the verge of laughter. The Italian engineer, bubbling with excitement, saw in the expression only the good-humored and somewhat recklessness of an American spendthrift.

"I have succeeded!" exclaimed Fanelli. "It was not too difficult. The company wants to examine the line. There will be twenty rifles, a machine gun and a full train packed with evacuees. They are ashamed for having abandoned the line, and the government now says it must be restored."

The paper was a document acquitting the railroad administration of all responsibility in case of dangerous eventualities. Nothing was guaranteed except that the train would start. Sevier signed and returned the paper.

"I have a suggestion," said Fanelli. "The political director of the railway, Monsieur Deschenel, goes with us. A cab will be attached to the train for his personal convenience. If you can secure an introduction, your comfort is assured. He is a man to know."

"Ah! Thank you."

AS THE sun was being thrust over the rim of the eastern sea, projecting across the water a purple light and suffusing the gray-and-white town with the pale glow of a dry dawn, the train began to move out slowly across the flat coastal plain which, a short distance beyond, begins to rise in a chaos of rocky hills and dry watercourses to the higher hills of the Abyssinian plateau.

A string of carriages, coupled together haphazardly, with the cab of the political director austerely taking up the rear, drawn by two little French engines, formed the train. The passengers were of all types found along the shores of the Red Sea and the Levant—Somalis, Arabs, Jews, Abyssinians, Armenians, Greeks, Italians, a few Frenchmen and Sevier alone to represent the Anglo-Saxon race.

Progress was irregular and spasmodic. Allowing for intervals to repair wires and buckle new rails into position, the train averaged little more than ten miles an hour until darkness began to pour into the deep *dongas* and the long shafts of light crept higher and higher until they touched the loftiest peaks, when Fanelli, in a frenzy of anxiety over his reward—somewhat reassured by their safe progress that the danger was not really great—forgot everything else in his determination to reach Dire Daoua on time.

There were signs of raids everywhere—cut wires, rotting carcasses of cattle, smoldering *tokhuls*, and débris scattered about the abandoned posts. The country, broken in barren hills, patches of burning desert and scrub jungle, seemed strangely silent, as though every shelter held an ambush.

Several times Sevier considered going to Deschenel's cab with the intention of making his acquaintance, but thought better of it, hoping for a more natural opportunity to present itself. This eventually came in a somewhat dramatic fashion.

As the train rounded at fair speed a buttress that rose on the right hand in a series of rocky terraces and came with unexpected suddenness upon an isolated station that stood by a Somali village, it plunged with melodramatic timeliness into the midst of an attack upon the station-house by Somali braves.

The defenders of the station, an Italian, his wife and grown daughter, with a faithful Abyssinian attendant, were putting up a good fight with a shotgun and an old Lebel rifle, but the Somalis, shrieking and yelling, with their women and children running about at a safe distance, shouting encouragement and carrying off loot from the outhouses, were already hacking at the iron shutters and thrusting their spears through the crevices when the sudden appearance of the train made them draw off.

The Abyssinians who constituted the armed guard of the train were the first to grasp the situation. Before the train had actually stopped they had leaped off and opened fire with their rifles upon the scattering tribesmen. Some of the Europeans jumped down and joined in the fight; others withdrew discreetly.

The Somalis did not stand against the infuriated Abyssinians and Europeans. They withdrew to their village on the edge of a broad plain extending away on the left of the track. This was not enough for the Abyssinians, however. The territory was Abyssinian, and the presumption of the Somalis, therefore, unbearable. The soldiers' rage fed on excitement. Charging among the huts, their felt hats flapping about their ears like Mexican sombreros, they fired the thatch and drove out the inhabitants, men, women and children, into the open—firing at the more distant targets with their rifles, but closing in wherever possible with their long, thin simitars. The excitement simmered down to caring for the wounded and disposing of the few corpses that lay about in the dust.

Sevier had leaped from the train at the first sound of a rifle, but, armed only with a Webley revolver, he had not advanced when the Abyssinians charged into the village. Though spears had fluttered about him, he had not been touched. As soon as the immediate danger had passed, therefore, he reloaded his revolver and looked about him.

He saw, to his amazement, the Arab hunchback troubadour standing near Fanelli, firing a rifle awkwardly but with calculated precision. The weapon had undoubtedly been borrowed from some willing Levantine who remained within the car. As the hunchback lowered his weapon to reload, he saw Sevier regarding him. This look seemed instantly to bring him back from a moment of furious distraction, and, rubbing his shoulder dolefully, he made a grimace of disgust and clambered back into the train.

Sevier turned about then and saw Deschenel, the political director of the railroad, standing conspicuously on the platform of his cab, watching the performance with calm interest while he gravely smoked a pipe. This sight greatly pleased Sevier. Pocketing his revolver and thrusting his hands into the pockets of his tunic, he casually approached the Frenchman.

"M'sieu Deschenel," he ventured, "it has some of the elements of a Wild West show, eh?"

"It was something else that impressed me."

"Then?"

"These Abyssinians seem to enjoy a smash at the Somalis; is it not so? To me, there is something interesting in that."

"Decidedly it does not suggest an *entente cordiale*," said Sevier, struck by the idea. "Perhaps we will understand the significance of it to-night."

"Are you, then, interested?"

Deschenel looked at the American out of steady gray eyes that suggested a sense of humor and an indomitable will with a shrewd glint of calculating attention. Sevier shrugged his shoulders non-committally and gave a silent suggestion of ironic laughter. Speaking in English, he replied in a low voice:

"Is a man interested in hemp when his neck is in a noose? A matter of very great importance brings me into the country. I am anxious to settle it. I can assure you I have no instinctive appetite for spears."

"I doubt that," replied Deschenel, with a short laugh. "Just now I had a chance to observe you. My God, those fellows love a fight! Look at them nosing about those ant-hills, like jackals sniffing meat! I understand you are an American. I confess I have heard of you; there was a quarrel last night, in which one of our locomotive-drivers——"

"You don't mean to say gossip like that gets abroad?"

"South of Suez, gossip is like water; it runs everywhere. We prick our ears at every rumor. An American is naturally an object of curiosity—if you will forgive me for putting it in that way. I have found also, sir, that they are most agreeable acquaintances. Will you join me in my cab? If we manage to get in communication with Dire Daoua by telegraph, you will have early news."

Sevier accepted the invitation with delight. His bag was, accordingly, transferred.

ORDER having been fairly well restored, the Somalis driven out on the plain, their village laid waste and the brave little family of Italians taken on board, the post was abandoned and the train moved on once more.

Sevier found Deschenel's cab very comfortably equipped with chairs, a table, books, a buffet, and a galley where a cook was preparing a substantial supper.

They had wine, chicken and an assortment of fresh vegetables that was very welcome to one who had been limited to Aden's meager offerings for a month. As they ate, the good cheer and physical relaxation brought forth the natural geniality of both men. Their spirits expanded and they chatted freely.

Although he considered it necessary to preserve his identity—as a commissioner working in the interests of the British government—from any one who might by so much as a nod of the head betray his purpose until it was on the road to accomplishment, it was also often necessary for Sevier to seek the aid of worthy allies when once he had committed himself to action. In Deschenel he saw such an ally; yet, because of the deep-seated jealousy which had long existed between the great powers over the railway of which he was political director, Sevier refrained from too eagerly offering the Frenchman his confidence. He preferred, first, to hear his unofficial opinions.

He knew, of course, that Deschenel was, in his way, the most influential European between Omdurman and Aden. The railway of which he was political director had been built through the combined interests of the great European powers, each looking on it as a tool with which to penetrate the rich, unconquerable, desert-girt empire of Abyssinia. It was Deschenel's duty not only to maintain the administration of that railway but so to conduct its affairs that no one nation could gain ascendency over another, and at the same time to keep the suspicious Abyssinians from finding any ulterior political motive in the extension of the line.

The late *negus negusti*, Menilek the Great, roused by reports in the European papers with which he was familiar, had before his death refused to let the construction of the road proceed into the metropolitan province of Shoa; but since the ascendency of the prince, Lidj Yassou, the foreign powers had ucceeded in furthering their interests.

The road now extended almost to the capital, Addis Abeba, and Deschenel, who had accomplished much of this, had in the achievement made himself unintentionally one of the most potent factors in the political development of northeast Africa. His power was none the less great because of the modesty of his demeanor and the simplicity of his *entourage*. He was a self-contained man. Looking at him, a stranger would have seen nothing but a solid, somewhat phlegmatic Frenchman, a native of one of the northern provinces, with a southern name, a suit of soft white-cotton cloth buttoned up to the neck, and a round white helmet such as French colonials wear—matter of fact, calm, assured.

FANELLI, beginning to have doubts over winning his reward, refused to ease the straining locomotives by so much as a notch of the throttle. They flamed and panted through the increasing darkness, the driver accepting every risk at culverts and over *dongas*.

Deschenel packed his pipe tranquilly.

"This man," he said, "either has the speed-maina or else he is afraid of the dark—two things that are unusual in our locomotive-drivers. As a rule, their nerves are pretty steady, and we try to check their imagination."

"South of Suez, we prick our ears at every rumor," repeated Sevier whimsically. "I have no doubt he has succumbed. There have been enough rumors in the last twenty-four hours to stampede better men."

Deschenel looked at him gravely.

"There are no new rumors of great significance."

"You mean there is no news at all?"

"Oh, we know, of course, that Lidj Yassou is going to Harrar—that our *diplomates* have formally protested at his conduct, and especially at his friendship for the Somalis—that the Grand Council of *rases* and other interested chiefs and prelates have gathered at Addis Abeba to consider the case. But as to what will come of it all, we know nothing."

"I thought Lidj Yassou was already in Harrar."

"Perhaps. I last heard that he was in Dire Daoua. We will know definitely within a few hours. Ras Taffari, the governor, of whom he is jealous, is also there. We can only imagine the meeting. Maukara is in Harrar."

"Maukara the eunuch?"

"Exactly! He has come out of the retirement of his monastery. Whatever happens, we may expect action of some sort."

"That's good! Do you know Ras Taffari at all well?"

"Very well indeed. I shall see him tonight. If he does not cut my throat for being a Christian, he will probably embrace me."

"Surely you would not expect him to become a fanatic so quickly?"

"Everything goes by extremes. There is no compromise in these countries. However, I certainly expect friendliness from Ras Taffari. But he is a quiet youth. It's hard to read his thoughts. Nevertheless, I am sure we can depend upon him. He has a grievance against Lidj Yassou. A short time ago some Somalis of the Ogaden cut the throats of about forty Abyssinians. Ras Taffari sent forth an expedition and captured the culprits. He sent them to Addis Abeba with a full report of their crime, and confidently expected that they would be hanged. Instead, Lidj Yassou treated those bloodthirsty savages with distinction. He gave honor to them, and sent them back to their country with messages of good cheer."

"I heard something of that," observed Sevier, frowning. "But I understood further that the *rases* made no protest."

"I assure you they were struck dumb."

"Nevertheless, nothing was done."

"Ah, there were murmurs in every last

remote *tokhul*. The savages by Lake Stéphanie knew; the natives of Gondar frothed at the mouth. The *rases* of Shoa may have been silent, but their hearts were swollen with rage. Had they not solemnly sworn by the death-bed of old Menilek to support with their last drop of blood that weak youth, cursed with good looks, who is now threatening to shake this part of the world? Do you realize that, *m'sieu*?" Sevier nodded. "Had they not made that solemn oath, then, that rotten youth and the women who seduced him would have been cast into the desert months ago."

"They will not break their oath?"

"I do not know. On that depends everything. An oath in the name of Menilek is the most binding oath in this country. The *rases* themselves don't know what to do."

"Do you think it is safe to continue on to Addis Abeba?" asked Sevier, quietly looking down at the end of his cigarette. Deschenel darted a sharp glance at him, in which there was a suggestion of disappointment.

"A man decides that for himself," he observed dryly. "If Ras Taffari has already become a Mussulman and the *rases* of Shoa decide to uphold the prince, a simitar may send both our heads bounding in the dust when we reach the station platform at Dire Daoua. The whole country will go up in flame. It will remain to all Christians a land of mystery and horror for five, ten, fifteen years to come. If, on the other hand, the prince is effectively deposed, we may again have days such as in the time of Menilek, when a stranger could go unarmed from end to end of the empire without fear of the slightest molestation."

"Monsieur Deschenel," said Sevier, "I should like very much to meet Ras Taffari. There are some things I could tell him."

The political director hesitated for an instant. Sevier added, therefore, feeling that the time had come to disclose his identity:

"*M'sieu*, I have not been quite frank with you. I am not here as a merchant. I give you my full confidence. I am here in the interest of our common safety. I have authority to do all in my power to stop this business before it is out of hand. The British government——"

"Ah!" murmured the political director. "I felt it."

At that moment the whistles of the locomotive gave forth in a deafening series of long, shrill shrieks. There were answering blasts, made thin by distance. Bells clanged; voices shouted; a hubbub rose within the cars, and amid these evidences of confusion, the train rumbled into the station at Dire Daoua.

Amid the uproar, Deschenel, nevertheless, found an opportunity to say:

"Stay near me, *m'sieu*. If Ras Taffari is in Dire Daoua and can be approached, we shall see him to-night."

THE passengers, pouring out in safety upon the platform, inundated the Abyssinian customs guard, who stood shrieking curses at the exits, and filtered away through the broad streets of the scattered town.

Everything indicated that peace still reigned there.

Messengers and concerned officials quickly gathered about Deschenel's cab. Despatches were handed him for perusal; letters were piled upon the table; anxious friends clambered up the steps to greet him. On the outskirts of this gathering, Sevier perceived Fanelli gesticulating violently to attract his attention, alternately bawling at the top of his voice and lapsing into agitated silence. When the Italian forced himself near enough to hear, Sevier said:

"It is yours. Go to Juda bin Ismael's to-morrow morning and the matter will be settled."

"Thanks—thanks, *m'sieu!*" shouted Fanelli. "Holy Lord, what a find!" Uttering a string of genial and happy curses, in the exuberance of his emotion slapping those about him on the back, regardless of whether they were Abyssinians, Armenians, or Frenchmen, the delighted Italian swaggered back to his hot locomotive wrapped in clouds of steam.

It occurred to Sevier then that the political director would be engaged with business for some time to come; so, turning back, he was about to remind him of the promised meeting with Ras Taffari and arrange a rendezvous when he discovered that Deschenel was already trying to attract his attention.

His eyes were sparkling; his crisp mustache seemed to be quivering with suddenly roused energy; his whole attitude suggested that he had received intelligence of the most stimulating kind. In his hand he held a long telegraphic despatch which had just been received from Addis Abeba.

"M'sieu Sevier," he exclaimed, "one moment! I have something that will interest you."

IN CONSIDERING the situation that now confronted the two anxious representatives of the great European powers, it must be borne in mind that the natives of Abyssinia are roughly divisible into four groups: (1) The Gallas, a pastoral and agricultural people occupying the country to the south and southwest, between the headwaters of the Blue Nile and the White, adjoining the land of the Somalis and the Hamitic tribes of British East Africa and comprising about one-half the total population, being mainly Mussulmans. (2) The natives of Tigré in the north, adjoining Nubia, showing most clearly the Semitic strain, and having many Mussulmans among them. (3) The Dankalis, inhabiting the rough, inaccessible desert country to the east, paying a careless tribute to the central government and professing the faith of Islam. (4) The Shoans, most important of all, the dominant race, numbering about a million and a half, every man of whom is a warrior fully armed at all times and constantly ready to take the field.

All this, of course, was perfectly familiar to Richard Sevier and Jules Deschenel. It made them capable of understanding clearly many things whose significance might have been lost to any one else.

Therefore, as they faced each other across the table, there was no necessity for lengthy explanations.

Deschenel simply thrust the sheets toward Sevier, and said in a voice whose timbre betrayed repressed emotion:

"You see. They have deposed him."

Sevier restrained his own feelings with an effort. Though this news seemed to offer salvation to the endangered empire, it also threatened to precipitate terrible consequences. He understood that the moment this news became public, the storm would burst. Bending over the sheets, he read:

28-9-16. Addis Abeba: Acting in response to a petition drawn up by the leading prelates and *rases*, asking to be relieved of their oath of fidelity to Lidj Yassou, refusing to submit themselves to Islam or to change their religion, Zeoditou, the daughter of Menilek, yesterday ascended the throne.

The *coup d'état* was effected without bloodshed. Lidj Yassou was declared deprived of his royal prerogatives and a solemn curse was pronounced upon him by his Beatitude, the Abouna Matheos, Archbishop Primate of Abyssinia, concluding in the following terms: The malediction of Arius and the reprobation of Judas fall upon him! By my parole, I, Matheos, excommunicate him.

Ras Taffari, of Harrar, is made regent for the infant heir to the throne——

At this point, Sevier looked up quickly from the paper, unable longer to repress his excitement.

"And at that very moment," observed Deschenel "the prince, with a turban askew upon his head, was probably bussing one of his giggling nautch-girls."

"Does Ras Taffari know of this?" asked Sevier eagerly.

The district superintendent, who had joined the conference, replied punctiliously to the political director:

"It is the first despatch that has come through, sir. I received it less than an hour ago. You see, I have despatched a train to repair the wires. The message came in code, of course. When it was reported that a train was approaching from Djibouti, I left the telegraph instruments in the hand of a trustworthy man who has instructions to seal it if a message comes through in clear. He is to accept nothing but code."

"Excellent! Then Ras Taffari does not know?"

"It is doubtful."

"Is there any other means of communication than your telegraph?"

"None that need concern us. The government wires are completely out of use. We have not had a train to-day; but one may get through at any hour. The main trouble has been to the eastward, where the Dankalis have been out of control. They seem to have known for some time that this was coming."

"I know that. There have been prophets among them. There has been talk, too, of the Witch of Gondar——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Sevier involuntarily.

"It is true," insisted Deschenel. "These people believe she is the voice of Allah. A word from the hag sets a whole tribe shivering."

"Where is she now?"

"Who knows? She is a *fata morgana.* You seem to feel she is near; but it is only her influence that is on you. Her power seems to be delegated. I don't know any one who has seen her."

"We might set a *falash* upon her," suggested the superintendent, with a wry smile, "to exorcise her particular devil."

"We might need a tribe of *falashes.* But there is as much truth as wit in that, *m'sieu.* A man's fanaticism is a fighting instinct; a woman's is a form of hysteria. It indicates a warped mind that necessitates treatment of the nerves——"

"Well, what about Ras Taffari?" interposed Sevier.

"Sir," said the superintendent, "he is dumb but furious. When Lidj Yassou appeared here recently, the local priests, who have been anxious for some time over the increasing number of Mussulmans in the town, went to him and asked that some provision be made for a new church. A mosque had recently been erected by the Mussulmans, and they pointed out that this made a scandal, since the Christian sacrament was not suitably provided for. The prince looked at the priests and grinned.

"Then he said quite distinctly: 'There is the new mosque. What better place to guard the Presence?' Ras Taffari was speechless. He retired to his house, and I have not seen him since. He has had no instructions from the Grand Council at Addis Abeba, and he dare not act without their support; while, on the other hand, Lidj Yassou has not yet formally declared himself, and so Ras Taffari cannot declare himself either for or against the prince. Usually cheerful, he is becoming sullen and unapproachable."

"In what state are the Mussulmans of this town?"

"Their numbers have increased considerably, and they have become very arrogant."

"And in Harrar?"

"It is a storm-center, sir. Large numbers of Somali tribesmen have poured into the city, and the desert Dankalis have come from great distances to make fantasia for the prince. Some very attractive women have been journeying in that direction, too. Lidj Yassou's egotism will be swelled immeasurably."

"There is Maukara to puncture it."

"Maukara, like a black spider, remains in his hole, his eyes twisting and turning. He says nothing."

"*M'sieu,*" said the political director, after a moment's meditation, "seek out Ras Taffari immediately. Arrange, if possible, for an interview with him this evening. For the rest, absolute silence. You understand?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"You have done very well. Now go, please."

FLUSHING with pleasure at the blunt commendation of his chief, the young Frenchman without further discussion retired. The moment the door closed behind him, Deschenel turned with great energy to Sevier.

"I am glad to know we are together in this matter," he said. "I do not inquire into the degree of your authority. From the reports of my inspectors in Djibouti and from what I have myself observed of you, I am convinced it is sufficient."

"You may have every confidence in me," declared Sevier. "I should prefer, though, that you cable for corroboration to the political resident at Aden. Mention that the inquiry concerns the son of Bobs Sevier."

"Bobs!" exclaimed Deschenel incredulously. "It is impossible! You, the son of Bobs Sevier?"

Sevier drew an old signet from his pocket and passed it to the political director.

"It is the only identification I dare carry."

"But I knew him at Fashoda! Think of it! It is incredible."

"It is true, nevertheless."

"Amazing! I am delighted! Yes; it is true. You resemble him. Ah, that is excellent! It is, truly! At Fashoda! You've heard of that incident, when Great Britain and France waited the wave of a French officer's sword as the sign of a declaration of war? Think of such a war starting by the head waters of the Nile! Bobs was with the British; but he knew my commander also—he knew every one, that man! But, beyond all that, he knew what none else knew—that is, what was in my commander's mind. It enthralls me even now."

"Yes?"

"It was nothing less than to divert the

Nile near its source—to turn it into the Sahara and make a garden of that arid waste. The scheme sounds like madness, yet it is perfectly feasible. The desert lies low. At this point the Nile does not flow too swiftly to control. Consider the luxuriance that would burst from that vast burning region!"

"Think of Egypt!"

"Ah, that was the point!"

"Inexpressible famine, misery, an upset of the equilibrium to which the nations had grown accustomed."

"Bobs Sevier said those very things."

"He was my father, remember."

"It explains everything."

When Henry Stanley, on his expedition to relieve Emin Pasha, reached that reluctant gentleman's tent after months of arduous travel through central Africa, Emin told him that Bobs Sevier had been there a week before, had advised him to stick to his post, and had left three days later with the expressed intention of penetrating to General Gordon at Khartum.

His body was not among the thirteen thousand slain, however, who were found by the relieving British column which arrived at Khartum two days later. The Abyssinians still remember him in the battles which the Tigréans had successfully fought against the Mahdi when his fanatics, elated by the massacre at Khartum, made attempts to invade Abyssinia in the years that followed. He had lived, too, to help reconcile the increasing enmity between France and Britain which culminated at Fashoda, when invading columns of French and British met and separately claimed the right of annexation.

He died peacefully by Lake Como, in Italy, in 1908, when the world had almost reached its apogee of civilization, leaving behind him a twenty-four-year old son, with the inheritance of a large fortune, an insatiable love of exotic lands assimilated through companionship with his father, and the fixed determination to employ his wealth, wit, and energy to the encouragement of savage virtues and the maintenance of peace with honor in savage lands.

It was this son, then, Richard Sevier, acting as agent of Great Britain in the interest of the Allied nations, at whom Deschenel found himself gazing thoughtfully.

"I imagine," said Sevier, when they had done with their exchange of compliments, "that the present threat against the equilibrium of the world is even greater than the proposed divergence of the Nile. The Mahdi's show, too, was small to what this may become."

"You are right. We have talked enough. It is time now to act. Do you comprehend the situation fully?"

'I appreciate it fairly well."

"Precisely, then, it is this: The loyal Abyssinians—mainly Shoans, centering in Addis Abeba—will resist the ambitions of the prince, Lidj Yassou. These natives of Shoa are less than two million strong. The Tigréans, to the north, however, will support them unless some disastrous influence which we have not yet considered turns them also into revolt—which God forbid! We have to fear, then, the savage Dankalis to the east, who will wage war on the side of the prince in the cause of Islam, but most particularly the natives of the province in which we are now, the Gallas. Harrar district in particular is sure overwhelmingly to support the prince if he acts promptly and with decision. Speed and energy are all he now requires."

"It is our part, then, to act first."

Just then the door opened, and the young superintendent reentered.

"Monsieur Deschenel," he said, "I have succeeded in reaching Ras Taffari by telephone. He will see you whenever you wish, though I believe he is in a strange mood."

IN THE darkness of early nightfall it was not easy to take much note of the town or to tell what changes had occurred since rumors of impending disturbances had filled the inhabitants with unrest. The streets were broad, the houses scattered, and the horses upon which the three men were mounted, with a servant on foot bounding along through the dust to point the way with his long staff, scurried about corners and down shadowy lanes flanked with dimly outlined trees until they approached the building where the young Ras Taffari had taken up his residence.

A group of white-clad figures leaped to their feet with threatening gestures and hoarse cries as the horses swerved through the entrance.

"And you, Ras Taffari, have been declared regent of the heir to the throne—*negus negusti!*" The young man's hand flew to his heart. He murmured under his breath, "O Christos!"

The three Europeans, however, were expected. As soon as they were identified by members of the household guard, who thrust lanterns into their faces while rifles and spears were leveled at their breasts, they were taken into the house. They were ushered into a bare-looking room furnished with a few good though dusty Arab rugs, some photographic enlargements and chairs of indifferent sorts.

Here they were greeted by Ras Taffari. The young governor, usually bright, smiling and graciously attentive in his manner, had something about him that indicated a degree of sullenness and ill-defined resentment, as though he anticipated he would be subjected to querulous complaints and was in no mood to accept them.

As the three men entered, he, extending both hands to his friend Deschenel, welcomed him with a sort of distracted courtesy. In turn, he bowed to the young superintendent, whom he knew, and shook hands gravely with Sevier as the American was presented.

Sevier, who had not before seen this young and illustrious *ras*, observed a slim youth not much beyond twenty years of age, with pleasing features, a complexion that was as swarthy as a Mexican peon's, and a light mustache and beard trimmed in the imperial style. He wore the typical white breeches of the Abyssinian, tight about the ankles like Jodhpur breeches, rough sandals into which bare feet were thrust, and a white enveloping shawl of cotton cloth from under the edge of which peeped the scabbard of a simitar. He had discarded a broad felt hat, baring a close-cropped, well-shaped head. The expression in his large eyes was intelligent, though passionate. The political director came at once to his point.

"Your Highness," he said, "I have the honor, I believe, to be the first to bring news to you of great importance—news that has brought much happiness to us. In essence, it is this: Lidj Yassou, the prince, has been excommunicated by the Abouna Matheos. The *rases*, therefore, have been relieved of their oath of allegiance to him. Zeoditou has ascended the throne of Menilek. And you, Ras Taffari, have been declared regent of the heir to the throne—*negus negusti!*"

The young man's hand flew to his heart. He seemed to reel as the full import of the words struck into his consciousness. Tears gushed to his eyes, and, lifting his face, he murmured under his breath,

"O Christos!"

The next instant he darted a wild glance at the speaker.

"By what authority do *you* bear this news?" he demanded in a trembling voice.

"I have no authority. But your Excellency has never had occasion to question my word. The news has reached me within the hour over the railway telegraph lines. I came with M'sieu Sevier, whose responsibility is as great as mine, immediately. The railway line is freely at your service. I urge you to confirm the report."

Ras Taffari passed his hand dazedly over his eyes. He looked once more into the grave face of the Frenchman.

BEHIND those steady eyes, as though with a flash of inspiration, he seemed to see at once what Deschenel and his companion stood for. His eyes fell. Tremulously his hand felt for the grip of his simitar, as though he realized what the future might require of him. He murmured:

"It is true. It must be true. I believe you, *m'sieu*."

Sevier said quietly in a voice full of conviction,

"We came to offer you our congratulations—but above all to offer you our immediate advice and assistance."

"Your assistance?"

"Exactly, your Excellency," interposed Deschenel. "You must realize that the moment this news becomes public, the populace will take sides. There will be a tumult unless you are ready with loyal troops to restrain it immediately."

"But yes," muttered Ras Taffari, frowning.

"If you permit two hours' delay," added the political director bluntly, "it is possible that you, who are now regent to the throne of Juda, may become a headless corpse flung in the dust."

With a sharp curse, the new regent half drew his simitar.

"By the Virgin, think what you're saying!"

"When I speak," said Deschenel quietly, without altering his manner by so much as a quickened breath, "I speak the truth. A brave man need not fear it. A wise man will listen. That is why I speak my mind to you."

"Forgive me, my friend!" cried the regent impulsively, a light shining from his countenance. "In the midst of treason, when friend becomes foe, when those whom we have learned to love all at once become objects of hatred, when honor is mocked and the faith of our fathers made a jest, it seems hopeless to trust any man——"

"I do not ask to be trusted. Your intelligence is alone sufficient to prove the truth of what I say."

"Ah, but I am no fool! I shall take all precautions. Quick! The trees will be whispering rumors. The jackals will yelp the news in the dark—is it not so? Mikael! Georgios! Gebra!"

Almost instantly, it seemed, the room filled with swarthy *shums*, or lesser chieftains, devoted to the young governor. They stood in a shuffling crowd, armed, alert, ready for any emergency. Ras Taffari inspected them swiftly. Several he despatched upon distant errands.

WHEN they had departed, the doors were closed on those who remained and guards stationed.

"My valiant ones," exclaimed the governor, with a gesture betraying the intensity of his emotions, "it is not news to you that our faith and country are threatened! It is not news to you that treachery would force us to submit to Islam! The horizon is walled with clouds of war. I have waited with too much patience. I have permitted you to suffer too many slurs and indignities at the hands of these apostate dogs of Islam. It is ended! You are free to obey me in all—to obey me in everything! I ask you, then, to be ready to make every sacrifice for the faith of Christ and for your country."

Instantly a chorus of exclamations, hoarse and vibrant, burst from the throats of the warriors; several screamed oaths of defiance to their enemies. They called on St. Gabriel, St. George and St. Michael to give strength to their arms and wither the souls of all traitors. Simitars were flashed. Rifles were waved above their heads.

"Words of assurance; deeds will follow. I thank God and you, my valiant friends, for your expressions of loyalty. We may yet revive the glory of Abyssinia."

"Have you decided upon any plans?" suggested Deschenel unobtrusively.

Ras Taffari, cooled at once by this eminently practical question, looked thoughtfully at his interlocutor.

"Yes. But at the same time we welcome your suggestions."

"It is of utmost importance, then, that the railway be kept open. Do not permit yourself to be cut off from Addis Abeba or Djibouti again. With the railway at your command, you can concentrate at any point rapidly. You may be sure of my complete cooperation in every way."

"I agree with you. There will be guards stationed along the line——"

"Permit me," interposed Sevier, "to make three major suggestions. First, post a strong armed force on the road between Dire Daoua and Harrar, with orders to permit no unauthorized person to pass. Second, despatch a force to Hawash at the first opportunity to defend the bridge over the river, because, if your enemy is wise, he will attempt to cut your communication with Addis Abeba at that point. Third, take immediate and drastic action to prevent any tumult in this town. This ought to be done within half an hour, because, as Monsieur Deschenel has said, the moment this becomes general there will be trouble."

The political director nodded his head emphatically.

"You have covered the situation entirely," he said. "I hope that his Excellency's plans will embrace these."

"They do," said Ras Taffari, who had been listening attentively. "M'sieu Sevier's suggestions are very welcome."

Sevier, who thought it possible that a *coup* might be effected in Harrar by which the prince and his cabal might be taken by surprise, asked permission to go immediately to Harrar with a couple of trustworthy men to convey the news to Maukara and suggest an attempt to capture the prince while he was yet unprepared. Ras Taffari gladly gave his approval, and proceeded immediately to write in his own name the necessary permission and a message to Dedjatch Maukara. While this was being done, Sevier took the opportunity of addressing a few words to Deschenel.

"I suppose you are continuing on to Addis Abeba. There is certain to be a European cabal of some sort engineered by Austrians, Germans and Turks. It will be well for us to keep an eye on it. The idea isn't new; I heard rumors of it at Constantinople at the outbreak of war. If you have an opportunity of seeing Beveridge, the British minister, you might tell him what I am up to—only, don't make my character too generally known, because I don't want to resort to disguise."

"But what are you up to in Harrar?"

"Principally to eliminate Lidj Yassou himself. In what manner I neither know nor care. There will be no scruples about getting rid of a weak-kneed debauchee who constitutes such a frightful menace. There is another object, however. I'm convinced Lidj Yassou is a puppet of some power other than Germany—the roots of his madness are not driven in Berlin. It may be the Turkish minister at Addis Abeba; but he appears to be merely a fat, pink-and-white, unimaginative fool. I don't suspect him at all."

"On the other hand, the Germans are very keen men, and entirely unrestricted in their movements," said Deschenel.

"Nevertheless, I'm convinced we must look further. Austria would never consent to the resurgence of Islam."

"Well, what do you think?"

Sevier shrugged his shoulders.

"I simply bear it in mind. Lidj Yassou is a fool."

"It is more than probable."

TWO Shoan Abyssinians—Gebra, a short, solid man with a slight limp due to the blow of a lion's paw, silent, stern, unshakable; and Georgios, tall, springy, vibrant with enthusiasm, bursting with song and laughter—were assigned to travel with Sevier, and two trustworthy squires, also mounted, one of whom carried Sevier's roll over his saddle. As both *shums* spoke fluent French, they were soon at ease with the American, though Georgios found it difficult to restrain his curiosity concerning the stranger.

There was no chance for a relay of horses. The road, good in places, was elsewhere hardly better than a trail. It was broken. It swerved over high slopes, dipped through dark *dongas*, was deep with dust or littered with pebbles. Nevertheless, the highland horses, lithe and agile, accustomed to the clear atmosphere of the mountains, stimulated by the sharp coolness of the night, and well mounted, sped through the gloom silvered by the moon, as though they themselves enjoyed with stirring restiveness the rush of the cool, scented air.

Sevier, unaccountably uneasy at the presence of a party on the road before him, reported by the last outpost they had passed, endeavored to overtake it. Unfortunately, the strangers had a start of almost half an hour, and, though accompanied by women, could be expected to keep a fair pace.

It was a clear night with a quartering moon, and the stars glistened in a pale sky. The rolling hills, the soft shadows of copses, the vague lines of sunken water-courses and the subtle incense of the mountains lent an unexpected charm to the race. Besides, the smooth leap of the horses under them, the rush of the scented atmosphere against their faces sent the blood charging through their veins, washing away any corroding thoughts of violence and corruption. Excited by the sheer joyousness of the ride, Georgios's exuberance of feeling overcame him, and he burst into a long recitative song, the notes of which, swelling and dying away, pulsing to the rhythm of the horses' hoofs, echoed sweetly enough against the dim hills.

It awakened strange responses. A pair of jackals yelped from a remote meadow; a hyena, slinking like a swift shadow across their trail, plunged into the shelter of a shadowy *donga* and moaned dismally, and a baboon, roused from sleep, barked truculently from a rocky hillside. The billowy coffee country seemed to stir with hidden life that called for a friendly recognition.

As the horses slowed down to an amble to take a long slope spangled with light and shadow where the road cut through a hill, suddenly a terrible cry broke the shadows about them.

"Wah! *Nasrani! Y'Allah!* Death to the idolaters!"

There was a clattering rush of hoofs, a tumult of shrieks, curses and plunging bodies, and a party of horsemen flung themselves upon the three riders.

Sevier's adventures on the road to Harrar and what happened to him there. These form the exciting chapters of the next instalment. See December EVERYBODY'S—out November 15th.

The Melody *in* F

If One Wants to Do a Thing Badly Enough, He Nearly Always Succeeds, Although the Forces That Help Him to His Goal May Be Startlingly Incongruous

By George F. Worts and Grace H. Wiley

Illustration by Harold Anderson

WHEN Homer Barberie woke on his first morning in America, it took him a moment to discover where he was—in the attic room of a cheap lodging-house near the wharf where he had disembarked the night before. He was three thousand miles from home in a strange land, and he recalled now that the room had been shared by a fat young man who smelled of livery-stables and who had roared at him because Homer had left the window open. His roommate had stamped out again before dawn, but he had not taken the odor of livery-stables with him. The air in the little room was sour, and Homer had not slept very well.

He was dressed and sitting on the edge of the cot when some one knocked sharply on the door, then opened it a few inches. The owner of a plump, rosy face asked cheerily,

"Just gettin' up?"

Homer nodded sheepishly, and supposed she must be a very privileged chambermaid. She had the black-eyed, rosy-cheeked prettiness of the full-bosomed English-barmaid type; and she chuckled at his embarrassment.

"Gee, sonny! You needn't be scared of me. You ain't the first pillow-pounder I've yanked out of bed and sent to work. Say; did yeh just come over?"

Homer nodded shyly. Shyness was the curse of his young manhood. He had never been able to get along with girls. They didn't like shy men; they liked men who were masterful and assertive and confident. Hetty, however, was an exception to this sweeping rule. Her heart was an elastic organ—she liked them all. While Homer burned from old rose to magenta, she straightened up the cot where the teamster had tossed and snored, her beautiful white arms flipping the mattress about as if it were a blanket, and she chattered amiably.

"Was the trip rough comin' over?" she wanted to know. "I come near dyin' when they brought me—I was so seasick and homesick!"

The young man on the cot smiled when she laughed that hearty laugh; he felt a little more at ease.

Here was some one who understood his own aching loneliness!

"Where did you come from?" he asked eagerly.

And when Hetty named the parish adjoining his own, he fairly glowed. They exchanged memories, and presently Hetty became practical.

"What's your trade, Mr. Barberie?"

"I'm going to become a member of the largest orchestra in Montreal," he said proudly, "and during my leisure hours I intend to study harmony. I—I'm a pianist. I improvise."

Hetty spanked a pillow.

"That so? I'm fond of music myself. There was a doll of a new one-step at the Trainmen's Ball the other night. Mr. Donovan, down in the first-floor front, took me. It was the 'Yellow Dog Blues.' Baby!"

She rolled her big black eyes and sighed rapturously. "You know how it goes—tum-tum-ta-ta-ta!"—this in a rich, deep contralto.

Homer was ashamed to confess that he had never heard of that delicious melody, and he instantly sensed that her opinion of him had fallen. His shyness came sweeping back, as it always did under any criticism, spoken or implied.

"I think I better be washing up," he murmured.

Hetty strolled to the door.

"Stop by the kitchen and I'll fix you a pot o' tea. It's bitter cold to-day, and it may—it may pep you up. You'll need it. Jobs are awful scarce."

He really needed "pepping up." It was only his second day in this freezing new land; he was homesick and scared and young. That morning was enough to dishearten any one. He spent hours waiting for an interview with the director of "Montreal's largest orchestra," hours in which the courage imparted by Hetty and her hot black tea and buttered muffins oozed away. And then the director laughed at him.

"You have no qualifications," he informed the boy. "No training. No experience. Nothing! We don't need improvisers. What I want is musicians. *Bonjour*."

HOMER fled to the lodging-house, crept up-stairs to his attic room and huddled down upon the cot. Hetty appeared a few minutes later, a smiling, comfortable creature, bearing a well-filled tray which she deposited on the cot beside him. She understood his dejection; it was an old, old story to Hetty. And she saw to it that he drank his tea and had plenty of marmalade on his toasted scones.

"You'll feel better after you've eaten."

He already felt better, had felt better the moment he saw her cheering smile.

Hetty's tastes in men were catholic; she had a comprehensive fondness for them all, but when she saw with what doglike gratitude Homer repaid her little attentions, she studied his possibilities thoroughly. At twenty-four, Hetty was overlooking no bets in the matrimonial game, and it took her less than a week to make up her mind that she and Homer were made for each other. Homer appealed to her, as his kind so often appeals to Hetty's kind of woman. He was highly strung and extremely sensitive, and these qualities, which were those of a "gentleman," had gone straight to the dairymaid heart of her. She could love him as easily as she could love any one.

There was an abandon to Hetty's methods. She was a bully, but she was a beauty, with her rosy cheeks and her arrogant eyes. Her sweetness was that of an overwhelming perfume or a drink too highly sugared.

It was Homer's first experience with a woman in her state of mind. She bewildered him. He hated her, and yet he was drawn to her. There was a stimulating something in the very swing of her walk, and something to fear.

He learned from her lips that he was handsome—"beautiful," she said once, with those burning eyes of hers upon him. When they were alone together, that look in her eyes dismayed him, and they were alone altogether too much for his peace of mind. Hetty saw to that. She was always bursting into his room unannounced, with or without a tray of food. She brought him tea and cakes and delicious lunches, and watched him broodingly while he consumed her tributes.

"You're an awful cold-blooded kid, ain't you?" she exclaimed, after one of these silent, brooding periods.

"I guess so," Homer said meekly.

"Don't you like girls—at all?"

He was blushing now, with eyes downcast to the plate of sandwiches. He wanted to tell her that he liked her very much, that he appreciated her kindness, but the words simply wouldn't come.

"Don't you—like me, Homer?"

"Of course I do!" he gasped.

"Then why don't you show it?"

Homer put the sandwich down and stood up. And when he was up, he wished he was down again. He didn't know what to do with his hands, and he couldn't look at Hetty. Her glance seemed to be enveloping him, and it was a glance that changed slowly from seductiveness to scorn as he gulped and stammered that he liked her, and that he was grateful, and that he hoped he'd be able to repay her for her goodness some day somehow.

Hetty bounced up from the bed.

"Aw, that's just hot air! You don't like me—you know you don't!" She stamped her foot. "You give me a pain! Wake up! Didn't you ever kiss a girl?"

He winced at that, but he was a little angry, too—angry at her and at himself. He loathed her—and yet she had been his one friend in this bleak country. He mustn't forget that. She expected him to kiss her. That was what she had been driving at.

What an idiot he was!

So he kissed her the best he knew how. He went to her as he would have gone to some other doom, with courage as exquisite as piano-wire steel.

Her plump arms, so milky white and smooth, enfolded his neck. She kissed him lingeringly with wet, warm lips—until the boy broke away fiercely, gasping and furious.

It was then that Hetty realized the mistake she had been making. He was different from the others. That display had turned him against her. He loathed her!

Hetty was crude, but she realized her error and she made haste to retrieve what she had lost. Her methods revealed Hetty at her cleverest. She covered her face with her hands and sobbed. She sobbed noisily; her beautiful shoulders jerked and trembled, and when she looked up presently with blurred eyes, the boy was staring at her as it she were a child that he had carelessly hurt.

"I'm so sorry, Hetty!" he cried. "I didn't mean——"

It was the psychological moment for Hetty to leave—and she left, creeping from the room like a bird with a broken wing. At least, that was the effect she intended to convey, and it was very successful. Homer spent an afternoon of suffering. That he did not understand this contrariness of a woman's heart only made matters worse. He was constituted to suffer for others more deeply than he could ever suffer for himself.

AFTER this enlightening experience, a striking change took place in Hetty's attitude. Her eyes no longer smoldered; a little coolness crept into her manner, and he was made to understand that he had hurt her. She still brought him lunches and tea on the battered tin tray, but her aggressiveness was gone. Her glances were reproachful now, and her solicitude was that of a child. And she managed to convey to him clearly that, of all men, he stood highest in her esteem.

She mothered him. One day she removed the soiled clothing from his suitcase and washed it. Another time she darned his socks and pressed his neckties, although she found them still wrapped in the white tissue-paper in which his mother had placed them after performing the same service.

Gradually, as his confidence waned and his homesickness grew, he welcomed her. His shyness kept him from talking much, but Hetty was accustomed to silent men, and she needed very little conversational assistance.

"Any luck yesterday?" she would cheerily inquire. "I would 'ave asked you last night, but Donovan wanted me to go to the movies. It was a doll of a picture—'Love's Agony.' "

Homer listened to a detailed account of "Love's Agony," hoping she would not return to the painful subject of his unemployment. But she did. She always did. And he forced himself to listen gratefully to her advice, which she offered freely.

She thought his ambition to become a musician impractical, if not childish. Her great objection was that it offered so uncertain a living, not at all like railroading, where one had a pay-check coming in regularly. A musician was lucky if he could hold a job six months; and the hours were fierce—you always worked when the other fellow was having a good time.

One evening, when she caught him in the act of counting his money, Hetty told him she had taken steps to get him a job on the C. P. R.

"Donovan knows a man who can get you on as a sleeping-car conductor. You better grab it, Homer. You don't want to go on huntin' music jobs till you have to go shovelin' snow do you? Try this, and maybe they'll send you some place where musicians are scarcer. The railroad man'll write you in a couple days, Donovan says."

The letter came a few days afterward, instructing Homer to report to the training-school in Vancouver. And when Hetty read the letter, she snatched out her handkerchief and rubbed it fiercely in her eyes.

"You'll be goin' away—never thinkin' of me now!" she wailed noisily. Hetty did everything noisily.

Miss Abbott was wondering what lay back of that pitiful attempt at a piano. She had stumbled, she realized, upon genius—and tragedy.

"Why, of course I'll think of you, Hetty!" he protested, touching her arm gingerly. "Do you think I could ever forget the only person in this country who's been kind to me?"

"But you'd go away without me j-just the same!" Hetty sobbed.

"Go away without you!" he gasped.

"You wouldn't go!" It was an exclamation of amazement, not a question; but Hetty was not splitting hairs. She threw her strong white arms round his neck.

Homer was bewildered. He would have pushed her away, but he could not bear to hurt her again.

After all, perhaps the feeling he had for her was love.

IN HER first fine glow over having captured such a good-looking husband, Hetty was inclined to be subdued. On the long trip across Canada she waited on him like a doting mother, cooked amazing meals in the crowded little kitchen at the end of the tourist sleeper until he wondered how he could have managed without her.

Hetty's first act when they reached Vancouver was to rent a cottage on the outskirts of town, and she promptly filled it with green-plush and mahogany-veneer instalment-plan furniture.

It was Homer's first experience with a home of his own, and he enjoyed the novelty immensely. Later, when he saw the size of the monthly instalments and was told the number of them to be paid, his enjoyment waned. He had hoped to be able to save enough out of his wages so that he could return to his music. And when he had finished the training-course and went out on his assigned run, he would have every third day free to study and to look about for orchestra openings.

Hetty was well pleased with the existing arrangement, however, and managed to make that impossible. As things were, she was unhampered two days out of every three with any household responsibilities; and she loved that freedom. Innumerable tasks were piled up waiting Homer's day of leisure—floors to be scrubbed, rugs to be beaten, grass to be cut, a little garden to be taken care of. He performed these duties cheerfully, although he loathed them. He felt that Hetty had made a great sacrifice in leaving her mother and friends to share his uncertain fortunes, and he was anxious that she should not regret it.

It would seem, however, that Hetty did. As she recovered from her first exhilaration at finding herself a married woman with a home of her own and a certain standing in the neighborhood, she lost her first admiring awe of him, began to wonder if it wouldn't have been wiser to have waited a little longer.

One pay-day, when he handed her his check, she voiced her rebellion.

"A woman's a fool not to marry a man with money. Look at Mrs. O'Rourke across the street! She ain't got half my looks, but she's always havin' swell times, goin' out in automobiles just because she's got the clothes. You can bet she don't have to do her own washin', either!"

She had forgotten how at home she had done all the washing, incidental to making a dozen beds, scrubbing floors, cooking meals, without feeling particularly abused. But Homer felt horribly guilty for having ruined her chances for a more brilliant marriage.

"I know," he said contritely. "I shouldn't have let you marry me. I wish there was some way I could make it up to you, Hetty. I should have known I couldn't earn a decent living for two. But maybe I could with my music—in time."

"What you better do," she said grimly, "is to keep your mind on punchin' tickets, and maybe you'll get somewhere—in time."

He did not tell her how fiercely his fingers were hungering for the touch of a piano keyboard. He told her, indeed, very little of anything. His rôle had always been and would always be that of the meek listener. During that second year, the only thing that saved him from bitterness was the knowledge that the furniture would soon be paid for. And when that happy day arrived, he meant to suggest buying a piano.

Homer brought up the subject one afternoon, a few weeks before the last payment was to be made. He thought it advisable to broach the subject to Hetty before she had set her heart on something else. And he prepared the ground for the suggestion in a characteristic way. He performed diligently every task that Hetty had given him. The back fence was mended; the dead leaves in the yard—for it was fall—raked up and burned. The kitchen floor was fairly shining before, mop in hand, he presented himself excitedly before Hetty.

"Hetty, after we get that last instalment paid," he said almost breathlessly, "don't you think it would be kind of nice if we got a piano? Not a big, expensive one, but a——"

Hetty, who was stretched out on the green-plush sofa with one of her eternal cheap novels, glanced up at him coldly.

"Nice? Who for?" Oh, the infinite scorn she put into that "Who for?" With two words she told him of his presumption, his selfishness, his complete contemptibility.

"If you're tryin' to think up a way to spend your money, you can quit right now, because I'm goin' to buy a Ford. Do you think I'm goin' to have that O'Rourke woman gettin' all the attention just because she's got a car? You'd be hog enough to buy a piano for yourself and let me go year after year never havin' any pleasure. Just paste this in your hat, old scrubbin'-brush! You might get away with it with some women but—not—with—me! If I'd only had sense enough to marry Donovan when he asked me"—Hetty had made this complaint so often she really believed Donovan had asked her—"I would be wearin' mink!"

Her complaints in the last six months had become so bitter that Homer had been driven to wonder desperately if he might not raise money for her on some of his attempts at musical composition.

THE clickety-clack of wheels on rails, the furious song of a train rushing through valleys and hills at night, the wild music struck from the clinking-clanking vestibules grew into haunting melodies. There had come to him hundreds of them—melodies which he could have preserved if he had only had a piano, had known a little more about harmony and composition. But they came, they lingered sweetly a little while, and were forgotten.

Secretly he decided to take up his studies again. He had hours when he was free, with an empty drawing-room or a compartment at his disposal. And then he hit upon the idea of capturing his melodies.

He purchased a strip of map-paper backed with linen, visited a piano store and, after taking measurements, drew with India ink a replica of the piano keyboard.

From then on his days were full. With the silent keyboard spread out on a table in some empty drawing-room, with such text-books as he could pick up cheaply in second-hand stores, and with hours every day at his disposal, he set himself earnestly to regaining and perfecting his skill. It had always been his dream to be a composer. He had no hope of writing anything of lasting merit. He loved the songs of the people, the music they danced to. If he could write some of these songs and sell them, he could buy Hetty the things she wanted.

He was standing on the station platform at Lake Shuswap one morning in early fall. The first frost of the season still lay like a thin covering of snow upon trees and hillsides. Years of seeing this beautiful country had not dulled his appreciation of it. The lake sparkled in the brilliant sunlight like an Oriental gem in a setting of delicately wrought platinum.

The air was crisp and invigorating. Passengers walked up and down in pairs. A young woman sauntering alone, with her hands in the pockets of a raccoon coat, stopped beside him. She belonged to the royal family of travelers. From the top of her smart little black traveling hat to the soles of her smart little boots, Doris Abbott breathed Fifth Avenue.

"Isn't it simply delicious?" she cried. "Do you ever really get tired of seeing these places?"

"You never see the same thing twice," Homer replied, with quick enthusiasm. "Perhaps next trip the whole country will be smothered in snow. Maybe the sky'll be blue or gray or green. No; it's never twice the same, and it's never tiresome."

The girl sighed.

"Oh, I'd love to travel all the time, too! Have you been—railroading all your life?"

"A long time," Homer laughed.

"Doesn't time hang pretty heavily sometimes?" she demanded. She was examining him with bright, interested blue eyes. "Or do you study?"

"I'm studying every minute I can get."

"Railroading?"

"No," he said gravely; "the piano."

Miss Abbott let out a little war-whoop.

"A piano on a train? Oh," she exclaimed, "I know what you mean! You've got one of those little folding keyboards like Paderewski's."

Homer shook his head.

"Never heard of them. I use a strip of paper with the keyboard inked in." He gulped. "It's—it's handy for composing."

"And you play on it?" she demanded, giggling.

"By the hour."

"And you're a composer, too?"

"I've got a suitcase full of them!"

She was grinning up at him, her blue eyes sparkling with mischief.

"I do wish you'd let me hear you play—something soft and wistful. I hate noisy things. Something like—like——"

"MacDowell's 'Indian Love Lyrics' or—or Delbruck's 'Berceuse,'" he finished eagerly.

He had forgotten for the moment what a shy and inferior young man he really was.

"Yes! Do you know them?"

"Come in after lunch, won't you?" he begged. "Drawing-room F, in the next to the last car. I'll play MacDowell and Delbruck for you. Will you come?"

Miss Abbott was still smiling that mischievous smile.

"A melody in F!" she exclaimed, with another giggle. "A melody in F—and not a note was heard! I'd love to! I'll come. Sure-lee!"

He was playing when she peeked into the drawing-room door, sitting before the little detachable table and a strip of soiled paper on which ivory and black keys were indicated. His fingers were flying.

She stepped inside with bright, interested eyes.

"I was practising Chopin's C-sharp minor waltz," he explained. "Want to hear it? It's a good one to begin with, because it's so showy."

She agreed that it *was* showy, and watched with little bursts of laughter as his fingers darted about the strip of paper.

"You're marvelous!" she cried, when he had finished. "Your technic seems perfect to me—and I love your tone-quality. Play something of your own now, please."

Homer did so, humming the melody as he played. And presently something of the sadness of the composition and of the composer—the sadness she had been vaguely sensing in him all along—was reflected in her own eyes, in the wistful shaping of her mouth.

Miss Abbott was wondering what lay back of that pitiful attempt at a piano. She felt a fulness in her throat as his fingers rippled over those soundless, unyielding keys. He was lost in the sweetness of the dumb notes. She had stumbled, she realized, upon genius—and tragedy. She sprang suddenly to her feet.

"Why are you wasting your time here?" she demanded, with a fierce little thrill in her voice. "What—what are you doing here? Why haven't you taken your talent to market? What's holding you back? What's holding you here?"

The poignant note did something that no voice, man's or woman's, had ever done to Homer before. And before he quite realized what had happened, he was on his feet, too, and talking excitedly. It came out of him in a rush of broken-off ideas and unfinished sentences. It would have been incoherent to any one who lacked sympathy and understanding.

But Miss Abbott lacked neither understanding nor sympathy. She sensed fully his pent-in bitterness, his craving for expression, his stifled aspirations.

HE MUST have talked for fully an hour, blurting out that tragic, wistful story of thwarted hopes and yearnings, that fierce hunger for music. He drew without malice or resentment a picture of the grim and crushing influence that Hetty had exerted. He did not blame Hetty. He blamed no one. He was simply the victim of forces over which he had no control, and he was, for the first time in his life, phrasing his rebellious feelings to another.

Miss Abbott let him talk until he was exhausted. And when he had stopped, breathless and flushed, she wailed,

"But what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know," he said huskily. "Keep on, I guess. What else can I do?"

She swept the scattered sheets—his compositions—into her arms.

"Give me your address!" she snapped. "I'm going to take these back to New York. You poor kid! You poor, poor kid!"

And for a second time in Homer's manhood he was suddenly and unexpectedly kissed. This time, too, he was confused to breathlessness. But it was different. Yes;

it was very much different. He did not, in fact, realize until this moment just how different kisses could be.

IF HETTY had not been so busy choosing her clothes for the coming winter season of popular-priced dances, she would probably have noticed an increased absent-mindedness in her husband during the next few weeks. She had grown accustomed to his silences under her harangues, but his silences now were of a different nature. His mind was, in fact, miles away, following day by day a blue-penciled itinerary marked on a map that he carried in his breast-pocket. Miss Abbott was in San Francisco to-day. She would be crossing on the ferry now. And so he followed her through the days until she was back in New York.

Her promised letter reached him at the Vancouver office; and when he had read it, he sat down and trembled and tried to keep the tears out of his eyes, although something in him made him want to shout with laughter—something that seemed to leap out of his heart to the tips of his fingers and toes.

Miss Abbott had heard his piece, "Lonesome Road," on a real piano. It was beautiful; it was—well, everything! Mr. Shirmack, the publisher, had played it for her with his own pudgy hands.

> I thought for a moment he was going to fall right off the piano-stool. Surely it's genius when any one can make a little round-faced, bald-headed old man look like an exalted Elijah who has seen visions.
>
> Of course he wouldn't concede that you are a find, but I know he thinks so. I know it because he was so careful in pointing out every little mistake you had made technically. You have some studying to do under competent teachers, young man, but he admits that you have remarkable talent. I'm enclosing a contract from him and an advance check for five hundred dollars. Royalties later, of course. Isn't that wonderful?
>
> You simply must come to New York. I do so want to see you again.

And she was sincerely his, "Doris Abbott."

Homer went home with the letter in an inside pocket. How delighted Hetty would be! At last he could make his peace with her, could buy her the luxuries she craved—an automobile, gowns, furs—everything! And perhaps, later on, he could persuade her that he ought to have a piano.

Hetty was at the telephone, her back with its uncorseted shapelessness revealed unpleasantly by her tightly drawn kimono.

"Don't forget the cigarettes, hon," she was saying when the sound of Homer's overcoat being thrown over a chair caused her to turn.

She jammed the receiver on the hook and whirled on him.

"Sneakin' in here, tryin' to hear somethin', wasn't you?" she cried angrily. "But you got fooled, didn't you? That was Mame Mahoney I was talkin' to, if you want to know——"

"I didn't mean to seem to be sneaking, Hetty," he said patiently. "I just hurried up here from the office to tell you——"

But Hetty would not be interrupted. He had started her off in one of her tantrums. Her face was very red, and her handsome black eyes seemed to protrude.

"You can't say anything I want to hear. Keep your mouth shut! What are you standin' there gogglin' at? I'm sick of your moonin' and dreamin'."

"But, Hetty—" he said faintly.

She raised her hands as if she would strike him.

"I'm through!" she wailed. "I've stood it as long as I can. I can't stand it any longer! My God, I can't! Where am I gettin'? What are you ever goin' to amount to? I'm ambitious, I am! And you—you've taken the best part of my life. What have I got to show for it? Look at you! Just look at you! A dreamin' good-for-nothin'!"

"Hetty, if you'll just give me——"

'I won't argue!" she screamed. "I tell you I'm through. I'm done with you! I'm goin' back home—to London—with a real man. Bill Donovan! He wants me. He's always wanted me. And he can have me! We'll be married as soon as you can arrange things."

Homer did not try again to interrupt, although she paused now to give him the opportunity, as she always did when there was nothing left for him but to submit. He did not speak for a moment, only grinned sheepishly at her, as he had grinned from his pillow that morning years ago in Montreal.

"All right, Hetty," he said meekly; "I—I'll arrange things. You'll be happy with Donovan. And I—I want you to be happy, Hetty."

Kempy

A Joyous Play Built Round a Supergrouch and a Number of Other Persons Who Have Helped Make Your Life Cheerful

By J. C. Nugent and Elliott Nugent

Published by courtesy of the authors and the producer, Richard G. Herndon

KATE has always been the irrelevant note in the *Bence* family. She is twenty-five, eager, full of enthusiasms—"fads," her father calls them—and impatient of her stubbornly middle-class environment. She reacts to many things, but she has no real creative gift. Several years ago, however, she had a novel published, and this clinched her resolve to have a career. Had it not been for "Angie's Temptation," she might have married "*Duke*" *Merrill*, her suitor of long standing, who, in addition to other good qualities, has suddenly become very rich through speculation.

But *Duke* could not take her career seriously, and *Kate* sent him away. This was as great a blow to her family as to *Duke*, for *Kate* is expensive. She seeks artistic expression gowned in the best that Fifth Avenue has to offer and sends the bills to father.

It is two years since *Kate* quarreled with *Duke*, and to-day he comes to try his luck again, determined to be more tactful this time.

KATE: It's awfully good to see you again, Duke. Whatever you hoped that I would get out of my system, I haven't gotten you quite out of it.

DUKE: Kate!

KATE: We mean a lot to each other. We can't get away from that. But this time let us be sure we are not going to—just hurt each other again. You said things before that hurt a little more than I care to be hurt.

DUKE: I know it, Kate. I've spent two years regretting the way I put some things that I felt had to be said. You won't find me so lacking in tact now. You'll find I've grown in understanding. Two years away from the girl you love makes you realize what all the years without her might mean.

KATE: And think what a little thing we quarreled over—because I wanted a chance to express myself artistically in some successful way before I was switched off to running a house and bringing up children! A chance to do something to be remembered!

DUKE: Well, I've given you two years.

KATE: That was a fairly close guess. I couldn't marry you when you had no faith in me. It was your telling me that I had no talent that made me determined to show you I had. So I'm glad you've come back to me just now when I can show you. I've just got my chance.

DUKE (*alarmed*): What do you mean?

KATE: My chance to express myself—to do something. (*Cockily.*) I've worked these two years, Duke, and now I've got a chance to prove to you and father and all of them that I'm not a failure—that there is something I can do—something big!

DUKE: What is it you're going to do—get a picture shown in the Academy—write another book——

KATE: No; nothing so silly. I'm going into musical comedy! I can do it, Duke. You see, I met Oscar Sherman, the big manager, in New York at a party, and he thought I was an actress and said he had a part—a good part—just made for me. I went to see him and sang for him—my voice is good for musical comedy, Duke—it's a little light for grand opera. Now I'm to go over to Atlantic City and rehearse with the company. I'm to meet Mr. Sherman at the Ambassador to-morrow.

DUKE: O my God—that's what you're going to do to be remembered!

KATE: What's the matter, Duke? Don't you think it's wonderful?

DUKE: It's wonderful that I found it out in time to stop you. See here, Kate; this man Sherman is pretty well known—I should think you could have seen through this. Don't you see, you poor, silly girl—he's trying to make what he would call a "date" with you at Atlantic City?

KATE: Oh, no—no!

DUKE: He doesn't even suppose that you took his story about the part seriously—how could he? You've had no experience—and you say it's a good part. You ought to know better—you're twenty-five years old.

KATE: You know nothing about it—you're simply jumping to conclusions!

DUKE: Am I? Then I'll tell you what we'll do—you marry me first—and when you show up with a husband on the ground, we'll see how strong you are with Mr. Oscar Sherman.

KATE: Oh—that's beastly of you! You think I have no talent.

DUKE: You've had years to prove that you have talent, Kate—you haven't any, dear. You can't paint or sing or write. In all this time you haven't produced one finished piece of work.

KATE: Oh, really? How about my book? Oh, I know it never sold, but at least it was published.

DUKE: It was—two thousand copies—that was the big mistake!

It is bitterly ironic that "Angie's Temptation" should be an obstacle in *Duke's* path, for he paid for the publication of it, thinking that this would satisfy *Kate's* longings and hasten their marriage.

KATE: That's hateful of you! Is that what you've come back for—to discourage and insult me?

DUKE: No; I'm just trying to make you face a fact. I'm telling you the truth because I love you, Kate. And I'm going to marry you.

KATE (*wildly*): You think I must marry you—that's it! You're trying to destroy my one little hope——

DUKE: Kate, if you'll only listen! I meant never to quarrel with you again, no matter what whim you had in your head—but this ridiculous idea you've got——

KATE: It isn't ridiculous! You know my life in this house has become impossible—you must know that. Father is even threatening to sell this house—to humiliate us all. I suppose you think I must call to you for protection—at your terms. You're just like all the rest of them. (*Sobbing.*) Oh, don't talk to me any more!

Duke looks on hopelessly for a minute, then tiptoes out of the room.

Presently *Kate's* seventeen-year-old sister *Ruth* enters, followed by *Kemp James* ("*Kempy*"). He is a pleasant-looking boy of twenty, an architect by inspiration but, due to the present business slump, temporarily engaged in plumbing, which he learned in the army. He has been fixing a pipe in the kitchen and at the same time confiding to *Ruth* his heart's desire. He found "Angie's Temptation" in a Y. M. C. A. hut in France, and he is molding his life on the plan of its hero, who saw what he wanted, went after it and got it. In an unguarded moment, when he learns that the author is *Ruth's* sister, he tells her his deepest secret—his resolve to find the author and marry her. This seems the height of romance to *Ruth*, and she hastens to bring them together.

An admirer of "Angie's Temptation" is balm indeed to *Kate* after her interview with *Duke*. *Kempy* is overtaken with shyness, but with *Ruth's* urging and *Kate's* questioning, the story finally is out.

RUTH: Tell her! He has something to tell you, Kate. It's awfully romantic. (*She goes into dining-room*).

KATE: What did my sister say? What do you want with me?

KEMPY: (*diffident and bold alternately*): Why, I didn't mean to say anything, but, you see, I read "Angie's Temptation"—and I am an architect, and—oh—I swore once to find the girl that wrote that book and—and——

KATE: Yes—don't stammer—and what?

KEMPY (*angrily*): And marry her—that's what!

Photograph by White Studio

"Dad" Bence (J. C. Nugent) may be a supergrouch; but who wouldn't be with a daughter like *Kate* on one's hands?

Kate: And you got an inspiration from my book—you believe in me?

Kempy: Yes.

Kate: You—you want to marry me?

Kempy (*swallowing*): Y-yes.

Kate: Listen! Don't ask questions—just answer "yes" or "no." Would you marry me *now*—to-day—right away—within the hour or half-hour?

Kempy: Why—well—I——

Kate: Don't stammer—would you?

Kempy: I'm not stammering—yes!

Kate (*seizing coat*): How quickly can you take me to Williston across the river?

Kempy: Well—I've got my Ford outside—the boss's Ford—but——

Kate: But what? Are you afraid?

Kempy: Yes. *No!*

Kate: Then don't stand there staring at me! *Come on!*

KATE is such an uncertain person that her disappearance before supper-time does not cause the family any concern. *Ben*, her brother-in-law, and *Duke* also disappear, and it is supposed that *Kate* has gone off to dinner somewhere with them. At nine o'clock the telephone-bell rings, and she announces that she is married and on the way home with her husband.

It does not occur to any one, not even to *Ruth*, that *Kate's* husband can be any but *Duke*. So when she comes in with *Kempy*, they are staggered.

"Dad" Bence (*when he had found his voice*): Now, young man, why did you do this? Why did you marry my daughter?

Kempy (*with cool, sweet frankness*): Because I wanted her ever since I read her book, and it says in it a girl always admires a man that gets what he wants, and I always try to make an effort to be that way.

Dad: Oh, you do?

Kempy: Yes; I've always thought that a man can get what he wants if he tries, and it says so in Miss—in—what's her name—in my wife's—in Kate's book.

Dad: You get everything you want, eh?

Kempy (*modestly*): About everything.

Dad: Did you ever want to get *money?* Did it ever strike you that it might be a good thing to want to get some money——

Kempy: Why, Ruth said *you* had a hundred thousand dollars——

Dad: Oh, *that's it!* You thought you'd get *that!*

Kempy: No; I didn't want that, but I thought, from the way you asked me if I had any, that you wanted to borrow some.

Dad: Don't talk back to me! You always get what you want? Well, you're going to get what you don't want. I'm going to break this fool marriage, and until it's broken, you will keep out of this house. Now, go!

Before the evening is over, *Kempy* doubts the desirability of getting what he wants so easily.

Family complications set in very early for him. When his father-in-law orders him out, his wife commands him to stay and tells him her plans for the future. They will go to Atlantic City, she to rehearse for the musical comedy and *Kempy* to stand by as secretary and escort. The rôle does not appeal to him, but *Kate* ignores his objections and sends a telegram to *Oscar Sherman*, telling him that she will arrive with her husband to-morrow.

By the time that *Duke* and *Ben* get back from their ride, *Kempy* is feeling very low. They have been drinking a bit, but not enough, *Duke* says, when he hears the news. As soon as his brain clears sufficiently to grasp the situation, he gets *Kempy* alone and evolves a way out for all of them. The thought of getting rid of *Kate* is very sweet to *Kempy*, for she does not fit his dream-specifications. Ruth comes much nearer to them. She is the one member of the *Bence* family who seems to understand him. *Duke's* plan is masterly. He bought an option on the house from *Ben*, to please *Kate*, as he thought. He transfers this option to *Kempy*, and tells him to assert himself to *Dad* and to *Kate*. *Dad* comes in from his bedroom, disturbed by their voices and crosser than ever. For the first time to-night, *Kempy* enjoys himself.

Dad (*seeing Kempy*): What! What the devil are you doing here? You—you get out of this house!

Kate (*appearing on stairs*): Father, Kemp, don't quarrel!

Dad: So that's it! You knew he was here. You go to your room!

Kempy: She won't go to her room till I send her. She's my wife, and she'll do what I say.

Dad: She will, eh? Not in *my* house.

Kempy: This is *my* house, do you understand? It's not your house; it's my house.

"*Duke*" *Merrill*, (Grant Mitchell) (In circle) *Ben Wade* (Robert Lee Allen)

Kate (Lotus Robb), the artistic member of the *Bence* family.

Photographs by White Studio.

"*Kempy*" *James* (Elliott Nugent), an architect perforce working as a plumber.

Ruth Bence (Ruth Nugent) youngest, but not least important of the *Bence* family.

And if you get fresh with me or my wife, I'll throw you out of it.

KATE: Kemp, what are you saying?

KEMPY: I'm saying that this is *my house.* I just bought it, and I'm going to run it. (*To* DAD.) Now, you either go back to bed or get out. I'm going to take a husband's place here.

Duke enters quietly from the dining-room.

DUKE: What is the trouble here?

KATE (*appealingly*): Oh, Duke! Duke!

DAD: That fool thinks he owns this house.

KEMPY: I do. (*Produces paper.*) Here's the deed!

DAD: There ain't any deed. It's an option. I just gave it to Ben this afternoon. Did he sell it to you?

KEMPY: Never mind about that. It's all receipted. (*Passing it to* DAD.)

DAD: Don't believe he could sell it that quick. He couldn't sell anything that quick. Duke, is that thing legal?

DUKE (*looking over paper critically*): This is all regular, Mr. Bence. The option has been taken and your agent paid. He owns the house.

KATE: Oh, this is impossible!

KEMPY: Yes; but it's true. And *you* keep quiet! I'm going to take a husband's place around here, and you've got to help me run this house and do a wife's work and get sense.

KATE: Why, how dare you— Oh, Duke! (*She runs down to* DUKE, *who puts an arm round her reassuringly.*)

KEMPY (*to* DUKE, *sternly*): You take your hands off my wife!

DUKE: I beg your pardon! (*Steps away from* KATE *respectfully.*)

KATE: What!

DAD: What——

DUKE: He's within his rights, Mr. Bence. He's the husband, and the owner of the house.

KEMPY (*mercilessly*): And I've got to have respect!

This is very effective, but *Kempy* cannot keep up the rôle of strong husband, for his heart is not in it.

KATE: We've had enough talk, Kemp. Come; let's go to our room.

KEMPY (*in desperation*): Maybe you've had enough talk—but I haven't said anything yet. Now I'm going to tell you something: I'm sick of this whole business—I'm through. I came into this house to fix the pipe, and you took me off and married me. I'm going back to the Central House right now—before this thing goes too far.

DAD: Young man, you can't get out of your responsibilities like that. You're married to my daughter—and you own this house.

KEMPY: I don't want the darn house—and I'm not going to take it! (*He fiercely tears up the option.*) The house is no good, anyway! It's built all wrong, and the plumbing's terrible. And I don't like anybody that lives in it—except you, Ruth.

KATE: How dare you?

KEMPY (*turning on* KATE): You let me alone—you've done enough to me! I'll bet I could get a divorce in a minute on grounds of insanity. (*To* DUKE): Look at the way she treats me! I hadn't been in this house ten minutes till she dragged me off to that justice of the peace. And I'm not of age, either—and I didn't have my parents' consent.

DUKE: Then stop this rot about divorcing your wife—because this marriage can be annulled.

KEMPY (*wide-eyed*): *It can?* How soon?

DAD: You go ahead with that, Duke—soon as you can.

DUKE: All right. I will!

He looks at *Kate* for approval, and what he sees sends his spirits up with a leap. *Kempy* takes his Stilson wrench and, with a hopeful glance at *Ruth*, goes out. The *Bences*, feeling that now if ever is the auspicious time to get *Kate* settled for life, tiptoe out and leave her alone with *Duke*.

The telephone-bell rings. It is a telegram from *Oscar Sherman*. The operator gives it to her over the wire. *Duke* pricks up his ears at the name, but he dreads to ask what the message is. Kate's expression tells him nothing. She stands waiting for him to say something.

DUKE: Is—is it—bad news, Kate?

KATE (*smiling radiantly*): No—it's good news—he doesn't want me.

And now *Duke* knows exactly what to do.

Next month's play will be Leonid Andreyev's "He Who Gets Slapped," one of the most noted dramas of the modern Russian school. See December EVERYBODY'S—out November 15th.

So It Goes

This Might Be Called a Lesson for Mothers, Perhaps a Sermon for Sons; but It Will Interest All, Because It Is a Tale so Human That Its Appeal Is Universal

By James Oppenheim

CHARLOTTE FAIRBANKS was a mother who loved her son.

When her husband died, he left her with three children and a large brownstone house on West Eighty-third Street, New York, near Central Park. He left her money—enough to bring up her three children in comfort. Claire and Maud, the daughters, went through high school and then to Barnard College. They were good girls, very quiet and sweet, and helped their mother in every way. She was an adorable woman, small and fair, with blue eyes the color of a light May sky. Those eyes were like turquoises, not transparent but softly lighted. They looked at you wide-open, full of honesty and feeling. She was a simple woman, very loving. She loved Ashton, her son. He was eighteen; she still a young woman, under forty.

She was very young. Her complexion was a downy gold, through which a flush ran, a light rose, whenever feeling reached deep. Her hair was a faint yellow, and the hair was soft. She looked innocent, and graceful and fine. But when she clasped your hand, when she looked with sympathy into your eyes, you knew she was the mother—strong, wise, capable. She ran the big house without a hitch. No one saw the machinery working. Everything went smoothly. She brought up her girls wisely and well. They respected her.

But when it came to Ashton, she showed a weakness.

Ashton was a beautiful youth, tall, with troubled blue eyes, a small, full-lipped mouth of a bright red, and soft silken hair, which naturally curled. It was darker than his mother's hair, almost the color of seaweed. His hands and feet were small and dainty. He looked like a beautiful young poet. But he was not a poet.

Already, at eighteen, his shoulders had begun to stoop.

"Ashton," said his mother, "you would be perfect if you stood up straight."

"I know," said Ashton in that soft, persuasive voice which touched other women as well as his mother; "but I can't help it."

He could never "help it." The result was that he gave up everything which required an effort and work and followed everything which was easy. He gave up high school before he was graduated. The study bored him. He gave up sports. He could not bear being beaten. He gave up his first job, which was selling automobiles. He stayed at home. He began to frequent pool-rooms on Amsterdam Avenue. He began to drink.

This was in the days before prohibition. Ashton got all he wanted. It was his habit to be sober for a fortnight or so, during which time he made an honest effort to do something "respectable." He read the ads in the magazines and took up correspondence-courses in almost anything—in electrical engineering, in scenarios for the movies, in how to be a public speaker, in how to gain the attitude of success in thirty minutes. All came to nothing. He rose at noon every day, took some breakfast, shut himself up for a restless hour or two in his top-floor library, and then abruptly left the house. Sometimes he was home for dinner, sometimes not. When he was home, he felt that his sisters looked at him as though he was a criminal. He resented those looks. He said so.

"What can I do?" he asked. "I'm trying. Would you have me dig ditches?"

"Yes," said Claire, his older sister. She was practical and hard, and hated his indolence.

Ashton looked at his mother, who sat with her blue eyes shining with suffering, and spoke in that voice which so persuaded her.

His voice was soft, melting—the voice of love. And yet it was not love, but only a beseeching for love.

"Mother, would you have me dig ditches?"

"Ashton," said his mother, "I love you. Don't ask me."

This always silenced the sisters. They felt helpless. There is no arguing with love.

Later, however, when Ashton started to leave the house, his mother would follow him into the hall and stand looking up at him.

"Ashton," she said in a whisper, "don't go."

"Mother," he said, "I can't help it. I can't stand it. It is killing me."

"What is killing you?"

"I don't know."

That was all. He went. Perhaps at one in the morning his mother would hear him enter the house and climb the stairs. She listened. He shut his door. All was quiet. Then she wept.

BUT after about a fortnight had passed, Ashton went on a debauch. He got drunk and fell in with women. Then he was away from home for several days. His mother worried, sick at heart, agonized. She dreaded that some harm had come to him. She pictured terrible things—accident, arrest, jail, sudden death. She felt that she could not bear it. But she bore it, as other mothers have borne it.

One day he came down from his room at noon and asked for additional money. She had kept him on an allowance of twenty dollars a week. It was all she could afford. Now he asked for a hundred all at once.

"I can't give it," she said. "We live on more than our income as it is. The girls must get through college. Besides, you bring in nothing. If I cut down more on my capital, we shall soon have nothing."

"I can't help it," said Ashton. "I need the money. I am in debt."

She gave it to him. It was the beginning. A year later, she sold the house and took a cheap flat on Washington Heights. It was hard for her. She was used to the quiet and spaciousness of the house, the delights of privacy with the separate floors each so distant from the other, the luxury of fine furniture and hardwood floors and the help of servants. In short, she was used to the life of the well-to-do. But she loved her son.

Ashton had his room in the flat. He came there occasionally. He said that One hundred and Forty-second Street was too far up-town. Where did he spend his nights? He did not tell. But sometimes, when he was drunk, he came home, lurched down the hall and slumped into his room, falling on the bed. His mother came in and undressed him. He looked beautiful, even when drunk. He looked pale and suffering, and slept like a child. His mother kissed him, her hot tears falling drop by drop on his cheek. He did not stir. She thought, "He is my son."

Once, when he came to himself after a twenty-hour sleep following a debauch, his mother found him sitting on the edge of the bed, his fingers running in his hair. He was weeping.

"What is the matter, Ashton?" she asked him.

"I am sorry," he said.

It was enough. She felt that he loved her.

After several years had passed, she contemplated moving to a still smaller and cheaper place, doing without any servant and taking Maud out of college. It had come to that.

But her friend, P. T. Johnson, the manufacturer, interposed. He was an old friend of the family, and had once been in partnership with Fairbanks. He loved Charlotte, and had loved her for years. He wanted to marry her, and refused to marry any one else. She had not accepted him because she did not love him. She told him so. He laughed.

"You only love Ashton," he said.

He was a small man, only slightly taller than she, but he was strong, with a fighting forehead that glistened up through his waning hair, and clear blue eyes almost fierce in their expression. He was tense, and gave one the impression of a steel spring ready to snap. He was a fighter, with a square chin, a slightly humped nose and a strong mouth. He sat with his head a little forward, and you felt his intensity and power. Charlotte admired him; the girls felt he was a rock. He came often, and was welcome.

But he had no use for Ashton. That was why Charlotte could not bring herself to love him. She could not love any one who was hard on her son.

Claire told him so. Claire was practical, and wanted her mother to solve the family difficulties by marrying P. T. She said,

"You can marry mother if you'll play up to Ashton."

He did. He began to talk differently. He told Charlotte that Ashton was unfortunate and needed help. He would help him. He would give him a job.

Charlotte was delighted. After his next debauch, when he was sober, she managed to get Ashton to go down to see P. T., and P. T. had a talk with him and gave him a job. It lasted a week. One day Ashton came down to the office drunk, sang out loud in the buyer's department and insisted on embracing one of the stenographers. P. T. had to throw him out. He could not ruin his business, even for Ashton.

Then P. T. told Charlotte that he would go on helping Ashton. He would loan him money to go to a dramatic school.

"The trouble with Ashton is," he said, "that he has never found his true bent. It's so with many young men. I think I know what it is—acting. Ashton is an actor. You should have seen him down at our office. He would be a matinée idol."

Charlotte thought so, too. She thought she saw now what was the matter with Ashton. He was an artist. He was not made for ordinary life. He needed romance and the glitter of the footlights. His beauty meant that, his lovely manners, his adorable voice. Her heart leaped high. She saw her son becoming the opposite of what he had been, recouping all, wringing a victory out of his defeat, and ending in fame and honor which would raise up the whole family.

It was a dream. P. T. had to give money to Ashton not more than a week later.

But he won what he had been seeking. Charlotte loved him; they married, and they moved to a spacious apartment on Central Park West. You could see the park lying before you from those windows. Charlotte loved it. The girls were happy again.

THEN, one day, Ashton came home with his clothes torn and muddied, his hat and his watch gone, his eyes bloodshot, a dark bruise on the flesh of his cheek-bone, and his nose bleeding. He lurched dizzily, and Charlotte got him to bed. She hovered over him.

"What happened?" she asked.

"A street-fight," he murmured.

Something in her gave way. She felt herself reeling. She cried aloud in her anguish.

"Ashton," she cried, "how could you?"

It was the first word of reproach. But she forgave him, and nursed him and asked him if he had any pain.

P. T.'s face darkened when he heard the story. But he had made his agreement, and he was resolved to see it through. He went on giving Ashton money and said no word against him. But to Claire he said:

"Some morning we shall see a newspaper head-line about Ashton. And then our public disgrace begins."

He spoke truly. For a month Ashton was away, and then the morning papers were full of it. "Rich Son a Thief—Marries a Street-girl in a Drunken Debauch—Stepson of P. T. Johnson, the Well-Known Manufacturer." So it went.

That morning, P. T. could not look up from the paper. He sat, lost in it, his eyes almost shut, his lips tight together. His hands, holding the paper, trembled so that he shut his fists hard. He felt that this was the end of Charlotte and the beginning of a life of disgrace.

Charlotte was just beginning to pour the coffee from the electric percolator. She looked at P. T. and set down the percolator. Then she rose.

"Peter," she said in a low voice.

He did not stir, and she took the paper from his hands. Then her eyes fell on the head-lines.

For a moment she stood, her eyes shutting, and then crumpled up in a heap on the floor.

The blow changed Charlotte. From that time on she was a soul possessed. She listened to no one; she forgot about her work and her daughters and her husband; she forgot about herself and her appearance, but, suddenly aged, she went about slowly, weakly, putting out a hand now and then to steady herself, her face death-pale and her eyes shining as with a fever. She said nothing except, over and over again:

"I am his mother. He needs me. I must go to him."

Finally she put on her hat and started for the door. P. T. held her by the arm.

"Darling," he said, his voice breaking, "how can you go to him? You do not even know where he is."

It was true. She allowed herself to be led to a couch, where she sank down. Claire had to take charge of the house. Everything was still. No one spoke above a whisper. It was as though a fatal illness had entered the place.

THE evening papers told them more. Ashton had been taken before a magistrate, and as this was his first offense and the sum stolen a trifle—some thirty dollars—he was sent to jail for thirty days. His wife was discharged. She had been accused as an accomplice, but there was no evidence. Ashton took the whole guilt upon his own shoulders. The article went on to say that the wife was known as a street-walker and a pickpocket, a character well known to the police and the criminal element. Beyond all doubt she had caught Ashton while drunk and forced the marriage upon him.

Charlotte insisted on having this read to her. She listened, her eyes thirsty as she watched P. T. When he finished, she said:

"He shielded her. That woman stole the money. I am going to him."

He could say nothing. But as he sat there, bent forward, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands, he decided on a desperate step. He would break his contract. He would talk to Charlotte as she needed to be talked to. It might end their marriage. But any other course would prove fatal.

"Charlotte," he began, "did you ever meet the Sherwoods?"

She merely stared at him and said:

"I will go to-morrow morning. He needs me. He needs me."

P. T. knelt at the side of the couch and took her hand and held it to his lips.

"Charlotte," he begged, "do I love you?"

"Yes," she said.

"I have loved you for years. I would do anything for you, even leave you if you asked it. Listen to me."

She did not answer. He saw her vacant eyes. Her soul was elsewhere.

Then he said in a harsh voice,

"Do you want to ruin Ashton?"

She heard that. She looked back at him.

"Why?"

"If you want to ruin him, if you want to end him, if you want to take away from him the last shreds of his character, then, Charlotte, go to him."

A fear came into her eyes.

"What do you mean, Peter?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"Listen to me," he said. And she listened. "The Sherwoods had a son like Ashton, and Sherwood did all he could for the boy. He idolized him. But it all came to disgrace and ruin. And then Sherwood saw something. He saw that it was better for his son to die in honor than to live in disgrace. He saw that he could not help his son. Every bit of help he gave him only sent him faster to hell. So long as the boy could get money and help, he kept it up. There was only one chance for him. His son took it. He enlisted in a Canadian regiment and went to France. I saw a letter from Sherwood to one of his friends. He said something like this: 'Frank died on the field of honor. His mother's heart and mine are broken. But we would not have anything different. This is best—that his death redeemed his life, that he died like a man.' It was best, Charlotte dear. Ashton can't change through being indulged. It will complete his ruin. He is almost ruined, but if he has a spark of manhood in him—one spark—he will climb up on his own feet if we throw him out and refuse to help him. It is his only chance. When a boy has sunk as far as he has, it's kill or cure; and better to kill quickly than years of dishonor and suffering. Darling, don't go to him."

She had heard him. Her face contracted and screwed up with living agony. Her heart was wrenched. She cried out in a loud voice, tried to rise and fell back.

But she heeded P. T. It made her calm; it restored her a little to herself. She knew she must keep up and take up her life as best she could. She set about the housework again and tried to forget Ashton. And when memory surged back upon her and she could not help it, she thought: "I am helping him. I am helping my son. I have been to blame. It was my love for him that ruined him. If he had had a stern father who had refused him money and made him work or driven him out on his own, he might have been different." But she knew he wouldn't have been different; she knew that he had to be what he was, and that he had to take the terrible road he had taken. There was no help for it. The past was past. There was only the future—and the one chance of helping him by severing herself from him. So she went about, numb and quiet, changed, a little careless of her appearance and herself, very gentle with her daughters, very gentle with P. T. They tried to cheer her. She smiled sadly and said,

"I am all right."

She even thought that she had ended the matter, that she had severed the cord that bound her to her child—the cord that had never been cut, even when he was separated from her body at birth. But this cord was still uncut. She had done nothing.

ONE morning, at breakfast, she received a letter from Ashton. He had sent it from the jail. She saw his handwriting on the envelope and felt a rush of joy in her heart. She suddenly grew sly and watchful. Folding it in her hand, she rose and went to her own room. There she read it. It was simple. It read:

Mother, I need you. Come. ASHTON.

That was enough. She kissed his name several times and stuck the letter in her bosom. There she felt something warm, as though the hand of a tiny child were pressing her breast—his hand, as it once was.

She went back to the breakfast-table almost gaily. She felt like a conspirator, or like a lover who has a secret rendezvouz. Color came back into her cheeks; her blue eyes glowed; she looked young again. Yet it was like a last false youth which frightened P. T.

"Did you hear from Ashton?" he asked in a quivering voice.

"No," she said.

"Something has made you happy," he exclaimed.

"I am better."

He was afraid to leave her, but had to. He kissed her good-by. She reached up in her old way, on tiptoe, and kissed the bald spot on his head. She laughed.

"Poor P. T., stop worrying! I am all right."

He held back tears and turned and left her.

Then she put on her things and went down-town to her lawyer. Ogden Culver had been the lawyer of the family for years. She could trust him. He would have no objections. And he could tell her the best way to get in touch with her son. How does one go to a boy in prison? Is it better to have some secret influence or merely to go like any mother and present herself at the gate? She did not know. Ogden would tell her.

She found him in his office, down in a sky-scraper near Brooklyn Bridge and the City Hall. She had to wait for half an hour. It was a long time. But at last Ogden opened his door and beckoned her to come in. The sudden light from the sky, for the office was up on the twenty-first floor, blinded her. She sank into a chair.

Ogden was an unusual lawyer, with anything but a legal mind. He was warm and sympathetic, a small, slightly stout man, with dark hair and large dark eyes and a smooth face. There was much charm about him.

"Charlotte," he said, seating himself at the flat desk and puffing rapidly at his cigarette, "you look better. Surely something has happened—something good."

"I have heard from Ashton," she replied. Then she handed him the letter.

He read it and tapped on the table with his fingers.

"Of course you are not going," he said, looking at her.

"Yes; I am going," she said quietly.

"Does P. T. know of this?"

"No."

"Charlotte," he said, "you mustn't go. It will spoil all. If you want to help him, keep away from him. Oh, I know," he went on, raising his hand, for she was about to speak; "you think P. T. wants you to break with Ashton because of the family name, to save the family from disgrace. But it isn't so. I know P. T. He is thinking of Ashton's good. He wouldn't mind going down all covered with dishonor if it did any good. I know him. Don't think it is that. P. T. loves you, Charlotte. We all do. We want to help you to help Ashton."

She was silenced. She saw that Ogden would not help her. Then she grew crafty again.

"Ogden," she said, "you are right. I will go home. Thank you, Ogden."

And she rose and left him.

But she did not go home. She got the particulars from the tall policeman who guides the traffic under the station of the Brooklyn Bridge. He told her how to get to Ashton.

But, on the way, a thought flashed—a thought of her first husband, Ashton's father. She had loved her first husband, loved him as she loved Ashton. His image came before her, and she wondered how he would have stood his son's disgrace and what he would have done about continuing to help him. Her heart contracted at the thought. And then suddenly she remembered some words he had once said to her: "You know, Lottie, I ran away from home when I was sixteen. It was a good thing. It made a man of me. If I had stayed home I would have been ruined. My mother loved me too much."

She stopped short in the street, overcome. And then she moved forward, knowing. Yes; she knew. We know, finally, when the moment comes. Our fate is revealed to us. A power greater than we is felt in the heart. We are face to face with the inexorable, with the must-be. And decision takes place in us.

She knew that she had to give up her son. It was crime in her to go to see him. If she went to him, he would know that he was forgiven, that she would not withstand him, that he could come to her again and find her as forgiving and willing as she was now, that, once again, he could get her help—her love could deny him nothing. She knew it—and so, through her indulgence, he could continue his course until his soul disintegrated and he was destroyed, utterly destroyed.

Could she destroy her son? Was this love of hers not merely a selfishness, a desire to gratify herself, her unspeakable yearnings, her starved heart, her wounded pity? Was it not for herself that she was going to see him? Would it not be for himself to leave him forever, and to force him to that extremity where he would either be ended or come to his manhood?

She gave him up. The cord was cut. She felt something die in her. Ashton was hers no longer. He was only a son.

She went home and laid her youth aside. Mothers do this—many of them. They do it for their children. And the young grow up and know life in their turn. So it goes.

The Prison Movie

By Charles Hanson Towne

THEY shuffled in—a thousand pallid men—
To see the movie that the warden showed
On Tuesday evenings. Soon their faces glowed,
And all of them were little boys again;
For Mutt and Jeff, through a deft artist's pen,
Were cutting capers. How the laughter flowed
Down that dark room when a comedian strode
Across the screen! They rocked with mirth. And then—

Came cowboys from the towering Western hills,
Pictures of rivers and the crashing sea,
A springtime valley filled with daffodils,
The free, clean earth in its immensity.
And in that crowded room I heard men sigh
For the lost blue pavilion of the sky.

A Story of Paris, City of Contrasts

The Pointed Tower

Mr. Guelpa Visits the Pool of Auteuil and Finds Some Interesting Evidence That the Sûreté Police Have Overlooked. Also, an Important Arrest is Made

By Vance Thompson

Illustrations by Gerald Leake

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

ONE spring morning, Mr. Guelpa, formerly head of the famous Technical Police Laboratory of Lyons, but now retired and living with his wife and interesting daughter Julie in an apartment in the Rue Gît-le-Cœur, Paris, received a visit from the Marquis de Granlieu. He realized at once what had brought the aged nobleman to his door. The sensation of the day was the death of the marquis's son, the Comte de Granlieu, whose body had been found in the Bois de Boulogne. The relentless crime-hunters of Paris—that branch of the police known as the *Sûreté*—whose home was beneath the Pointed Tower of the Palais de Justice, had put the case down as one of suicide, but this verdict the count's father refused to accept, and so he sought—and obtained—Mr. Guelpa's assistance in determining the cause of his son's death. He did not believe the count had killed himself.

The marquis supplemented what Mr. Guelpa had already learned from the papers. Some years before the count had married Eva Ryle, daughter of an American millionaire, who had paid for the honor of the alliance by a constant settling of his son-in-law's enormous debts. But now old Ryle was dead and his money held in trust for his daughter, so tied up, in fact, that, with the undiminished profligacies of the count, she herself was financially embarrassed, and John Faynis, one of her lawyers and an old-time sweetheart, had come from New York to her assistance and had arrived the very day the count had met his death.

Mr. Guelpa began his investigations at once. He visited an apartment maintained by the count in the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas, since his recent separation from his wife, and then learned from Dominique, the count's valet, that the countess had been there on the fatal evening, as well as an unknown man. The count and countess had gone away together. From the countess's maid he discovered that she had come home very late that same night, her clothing wet, her shoes, stockings and skirt streaked with mud.

Mr. Guelpa next set out to visit the spot on the borders of the Pool of Auteuil, in the Bois de Boulogne, where the count's body had been found.

There was racing that day at Auteuil.

The crowd would not gather until after luncheon, but already—at noon—a temporary wooden fence had been drawn across the Auteuil entrance to the Bois. Inspector Rossignol was sitting in front of a café when he caught a glimpse of Mr. Guelpa going briskly toward the Bois. Rossingol's business was to wander where he would, looking for pickpockets, illegal bettors and the other small fry of the race-track. He paid for his coffee and followed Mr. Guelpa into the Bois. This portion of the great park was almost deserted. The race-track beyond was empty, save for a few workmen who were setting out hurdles. There was no one to pay any attention to Mr. Guelpa as he went toward the little pool, where the dead body of the Comte de Granlieu had been found.

"There will be nothing," said Mr. Guelpa to himself "for two reasons—first, because it is too late, and, second, because there is nothing."

THE pool of Auteuil lay before him. It was a little body of water, no bigger than a drawing-room. It wore that day a wonderful green mantle of satin scum, slashed with broad stripes of silver-gray where the water showed. A huge weeping willow, split in two by some storm, sprawled half in, half out of the slimy water. A little stream, sluggish and dirty, dripped into the pool through an iron grill. At the opposite side rose a hillock capped with a spindling summer-house. The whole place had an air of desolation and decay. The pool itself lay at some distance from the main avenue and was reached by a winding foot-path—a lonely place, certainly, at night, for not even the dreariest lovers haunted the decaying summer-house.

On the path, facing the pool, was an old stone seat. There Mr. Guelpa sat down and looked about him. The silence was unbroken. And yet, after waiting a few moments, Mr. Guelpa, without turning his head, said gently,

"Don't walk on the grass, Rossignol—one never knows."

The inspector, plump and alert as a robin, stepped out on the gravel. He was laughing.

"Then you saw me at the café?"

"Of course, and knowing your affection for me, Rossignol, I have simply been waiting for your arrival. I gave you a few minutes, and then, hearing no footsteps, I knew you must be walking where you had no business to walk, on the turf alongside the path. The hoofs of a hundred asses from the Pointed Tower have trampled over here."

"The Granlieu case?" asked Rossignol, sitting down on the stone bench. "I thought that was dead and buried—like the count."

"Rossignol, if you came here to commmit suicide on a nasty night, where would you do it?"

"I don't know as it would matter much, would it?"

"Not as to you, perhaps— You're a careless fellow—your clothes need the brush."

"They need a new suit," said Rossignol; "but my job is to be rolled in the dirt a good deal."

"Yes. But if you were a dainty gentleman in evening dress? Why did the count crawl away into the bushes soaked with rain to kill himself? It was not natural."

"Killing oneself is not natural," suggested the inspector.

"It is for certain classes of people—for the broken aristocrat, as for the heartbroken girl, suicide is always the way out," Mr. Guelpa said, and added, "You've had nothing to do with the case, Rossignol?"

"No—perhaps because there isn't any case."

"I suppose this was done for the practise of the thing," Mr. Guelpa said. He took from his pocket the metric diagram of the place where the body had been found; it had been drawn up by the technical police with great exactitude, and it was upon this diagram and the accompanying report, as much as upon the statement of the medico-legal authority, that the death of the Comte de Granlieu had been classed as suicide and the case closed.

The diagram in hand, Mr. Guelpa walked along the graveled path. The little path had nothing to say. It had been stamped upon by a hundred feet and, later, raked over by a park employee; it wound under the trees and beside the bushes until it broadened out to join the avenue in the park. According to the diagram, the body had been found near the roadway, partly screened by the thick bushes.

"It should have been there—or about there," said Mr. Guelpa, when he had consulted the diagram once more.

"See anything?" the inspector asked.

"It is a trifle late, Rossignol, after the heavy feet of Law and Order have trampled all over the place," Mr. Guelpa answered. He stooped and peered through his eye-glasses. "But one never knows. Suicide, you know, differs from crime in this: It need not necessarily leave a trace. Where there is crime—where there are criminals—there are always traces. Either your criminal leaves his marks on the place of the crime—footprints, nail-print, thread or match—or the place of crime leaves its marks on him, if only in dust. But the suicide does not always leave such signs—no——"

At last he finished his inspection and straightened up.

"That is where the body lay," he said, pointing to a depression in the soft turf under the bushes. "You see the blurred footprints in the turf on either side of the depression? They were not there when the body was found. The police report is explicit. They were made after Dr. Cray had seen the body, and they were made, Rossignol, by our colleagues who went in to lift it up and carry it out. The count stood here on the path, near the edge, facing outward—toward the pool. He fired the bullet into his brain and fell back half-way under the bushes. The revolver was jerked out of his hand and fell there—about four feet away. The right arm was extended, the report says, in the direction of that point where the revolver lay. By the way, one shot had been fired out of that revolver?"

"That seems to be the case," said Rossignol.

"Quite so. And the turf tells nothing."

"Nothing."

"Nothing—you are right," said Mr. Guelpa, "and that is what is extraordinary, Rossignol. It is more than extraordinary; it is terrible—sinister."

Rossignol had been looking on with the half-amused deference he always paid to the old director of the police laboratory, but the new tone in Mr. Guelpa's voice startled him. He came forward to the edge of the path and stood at the little depression.

"Nothing, nothing—the bushes above the hollow are apparently undisturbed—not a branch, not a twig broken. You see, Rossignol? And you tell me a man with a bullet-hole in his brain reeled back there and crashed down through those bushes? Rossignol, nothing fell there."

The bushes standing to right and left of the depression showed clear marks of rough treatment; branches were twisted and twigs were dangling, half torn away—but it was plain that the violence which broke them had been exerted in an upward direction; on the ground beneath them broken twigs and stripped-off leaves were scattered.

"I wonder if the men who lifted out the body were responsible for all this disorder," Mr. Guelpa said thoughtfully; "but, at all events, it is too late now—probably as they rose with a dead weight in their hands they thrust upward against the overhanging foliage. That is a police signature. But, Rossignol, look in the hollow again. As you wisely said, there is nothing. Now, there should be *something*—and that is why it is so sinister. If you fell back through those bushes, you would take with you something—if only a few broken twigs or little green leaves. And there is nothing! On the earth beneath the body there were no leaves—no broken twigs. You see? And in the bushes directly above it—these branches are unhurt, untwisted, unbroken. What do you make of that?"

"You mean the count did not kill himself here?"

"The Comte de Granlieu certainly did not kill himself here. Look at the grass, Rossignol, in the depression. It was not much disturbed when they removed the body—you see they lifted it up and carried it foreard. The grass has begun to straighten up, but you can still see how it was flattened out by the body. All the blades were bent slantingly in a direction away from the path. We already know that the body did not fall back through the bushes; had it done so, the grass would have been crushed under it. Now, the grass—it is perfectly clear—was flattened down all in one direction, as though a giant hand had smoothed it. And that was done when the body of the murdered man was slid under the bushes—swiftly and carefully in the night——"

"Murdered?"

"Every crime, my dear Rossignol, is signed. You only have to read the signature in this case," said Mr. Guelpa. "I think I know the handwriting."

HE STOOD in the graveled path near the little Pool of Auteuil, looking at Rossignol through his crooked eye-glasses.

"The body was placed there, Rossignol; it did not fall there. Then some one placed it there. Who? We are not ready for that question yet. We want to know first how the Comte de Granlieu, dead or alive, was brought here. Even had he come to kill himself, he was not the kind of man to come afoot to this distant part of the Bois. His shoes must have shown that he did not walk on a muddy night. He came dead or alive—in a cab or a motor-car. If alive, he might have left the carriage at the entrance of the Bois and walked to this spot; but we know the shooting did not take place here. Therefore the count, dead or dying, was brought here in some kind of conveyance. Hundreds of automobiles traverse the road yonder through the park. Not one in all those hundreds would have any reason for stopping here except the one that carried in it, dead or alive, the Comte de Granlieu.. And that automobile would draw up as close as possible to the bushes, without running in so far it would have to back out. You see? The nearest possible point is where the foot-path broadens out to join the road through the Bois."

"If the car stopped there—" Rossignol began, but Mr. Guelpa interrupted him.

"One moment, Inspector," he said hastily. "Do not go too fast. From what direction did the car come? From Auteuil or through the Bois? And in order to answer that, you have to ask yourself two other questions: Who put the body there? And why? There had been no robbery. The jewelry, the money in the pockets were untouched. Then it is not a crime of common robbers. Those who got rid of the count's body had another motive than robbery. Use your imagination, Inspector. Why was it necessary the body should be found here and not somewhere else? What they who brought the body have succeeded in doing is to create a mystery because they had covered up the motive—and until you know the motive, you do not know the crime. But we know what the motive was *not*—it was not robbery. So far so good. Then, for the moment, we may assume that those concerned did not belong to the ordinary criminal classes. There were no indications of a struggle. Everything suggests that the count met his death in the company of people he knew and against whom he need not be on his guard."

"He might have been killed here," Rossignol suggested.

"Near here," said Mr. Guelpa; "for the blood had stained his linen. As it had flowed down, he must have been standing or sitting when he began to bleed—not lying down. There was blood on the right side of his face—caked there—and that means he had been for at least a little while on his left side before the body was placed, on its back, under those bushes. And now I can answer the question as to where the automobile—for a carriage is improbable—entered the Bois. You see the situation. The count, dying or dead, was lying on his left side on the seat or the floor of the car. It must have been that way. Had he shot himself? Did some one shoot him? Never mind that for the present. Whoever was with him in that car had to get rid of the body. Had the car been in the Bois, there were hundreds of quiet places to leave it. But coming from without, from Auteuil, this was the first safe spot. Therefore, Inspector, the automobile came in from Auteuil, crossed to this side of the road and stopped on the curve where the path meets the roadway. It was driven in, of course, for above all it must be in a position to speed up and get away at once. If it were a small car, it might very well have made that curve without getting off the road. If it were a large car—let us hope it was—the left rear wheel ran up on that strip of soil under the first two trees. The signature must be there."

MR. GUELPA went to the point where the path curved into the road. Deep in the earthy border was the mark of a tire—for about eighteen inches the heavy wheel had imprinted a deep furrow in the retentive soil. It was evidently a Hardouin tire, for the pattern distinctly printed on the ground was that of the familiar interlaced "H."

"Don't come too close, Rossignol," Mr. Guelpa said. He was on his knees, bending over the wheel-mark. From his coat pocket he took a small bottle, filled with oil, and a brush, and began to spray the furrow with tiny drops of oil.

"Ah, that's done!" he said at last. The entire pattern stamped in the soil by the Hardouin tire was covered with a thin skin of oil. He stood up—his knees were getting stiff. "Have you got a bit of wire?" Rossignol shook his head. "Well—string?"

Rossignol had no string. Mr. Guelpa had taken from the pocket of his coat a tin box filled with prepared plaster.

"What I need now is water," he observed, glancing toward the pool.

"I might bring it in your hat," suggested Rossignol politely.

Mr. Guelpa stared at him with eyes like flint.

"My hat!" he exclaimed.

"No—mine," said Rossignol, laughing, and went and brought it back—his disreputable hat—filled with water. They mixed the plaster rapidly and, as they had neither wires nor strings, they bound it with tiny fragments of wood and twigs and bits of lining torn from the inspector's coat. The plaster began to harden quickly in that midday heat.

"You see, Rossignol," said Mr. Guelpa, as they stood waiting, "it was precisely at that place and no other the motor-car had to leave its mark."

"Well, heaven knows I do not want to go against your opinion, Mr. Guelpa—you've been our brain too long for that—but it seems to me this automobile might have brought any one. And the case has been pretty well gone into—all the evidence was for suicide, wasn't it?"

"Evidence? There is no evidence except that." And he pointed to the bit of plaster hardening in the sun. "The rest is human testimony, human speculation, human reasoning, human assumption. His revolver was there—so he killed himself, eh? What you should have said was that the revolver was his property and then ask yourselves in whose possession it was. I'll talk to you no more, Rossignol. Go off about your business—go look to pickpockets over on the race-course.

Rossignol smiled and pulled at his blunt mustache.

"The little pickpockets may run loose today," he replied. "Of course, Mr. Guelpa, I'll have to report this to the chief. You're throwing a bomb into the Pointed Tower, I think. Something will happen when I make this report."

Mr. Guelpa smiled in his twinkling way; he was no foe to flattery.

"I'm going to tell you exactly what to say to your chief, Rossignol. You will tell him that Mr. Guelpa is inclined to believe, from certain indications, that the Comte de Granlieu did not kill himself at the Pool of Auteuil, but that the body was brought there a very short time after death. And give him my compliments. Wait—I'll see the chief myself, Rossignol—and you are to tell him nothing except the message I gave you. You understand?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"And now," Mr. Guelpa added, "I think the witness is ready—the inanimate witness who cannot lie."

He bent over the plaster cast, tested its solidity and then lifted it carefully out of the oiled furrow and laid it face upward in the sun.

Mr. Guelpa had taken an imprint of the middle portion of the tire-mark, where the "H," repeated again and again, was most clearly defined. The plaster cast was only a trifle over eight inches in length. Mr. Guelpa peered at it through his glasses and gave a chuckle of satisfaction.

"I thought so," he said. "Here, Rossignol; get down on your knees. Look at that! You observe the raised pattern on the tire consists of 'H' 'H' 'H' endlessly repeated, while about every six inches is one large 'H' running through the pattern, imposing itself upon it, as it were. In this strip of only eight inches we have a cast of two of the large letters—one near each end. Look at this one to the left. What do you see?"

"There's a defect there," the inspector replied.

"A defect!" Mr. Guelpa shouted. "You call it a defect? The word is inadequate, Rossignol. That large letter 'H' is broken precisely two-thirds of the way across. What did it? A sharp stone? A flint? A knife—held in a hand which knew what it was doing when it marked that tire so unmistakably? What do you think now, Rossignol? That the Comte de Granlieu killed himself and put his body away under the bushes, with his revolver lying near at hand? The very earth is crying the answer aloud. Don't you hear what it says? It says: 'Murder! Murder! Murder!' "

MR. GUELPA'S visit to the Pointed Tower had been of short duration. He had been listened to with the deference due his famous career in the service by the chief of the *Sûreté*—that secret police to whose work he had given a lifetime of study. The "history" of the Granlieu case, so far as it had been gathered, was laid before him. He was especially interested in the medical report. The one thing of importance that struck him was the fact that the bullet had not been found. In addition, Mr. Guelpa's deduction that the count had not walked that rainy night to the Pool of Auteuil was confirmed by the condition of the shoes; they were clean and dry. Mr. Guelpa laid down the medical report. He saw in it little with which he could not agree. That death took place about eleven o'clock seemed probable. It was only with Dr. Cray's assumption of suicide that he disagreed.

"And your own conclusion, Mr. Guelpa?" the chief asked.

"Of course I was late; that made my study of the scene rather difficult. After the body had been removed, after the ground had been trampled over, there was not very much for me to go on. It was a blurred scene."

Leaning forward and speaking in his quick, clear way, he described his examination of the bushes and the grass upon which the body had lain. It was more than an argument; it was a demonstration, and it was followed by the chief with tense interest.

"That death," he concluded "whether it was due to suicide or murder or accident, did not occur at the Pool of Auteuil. What was brought there was a dead body. Suicide, murder, accident? There had been no struggle—the clothing was not disarranged. There was no robbery—the jewelry and money were intact. Therefore, if the count was murdered, the crime was committed by some one whom he had no reason to fear, by some one who could approach him close enough to shoot him before he could even think of defending himself. Not a common criminal, then. On the other hand, those who disposed of the body, who thrust it carefully under the bushes and left the revolver near by, were not robbers—common criminals—and just because they were not, it should be less difficult to find them. I say 'them,' for at least two pairs of hands laid the dead man where he was found."

"You are going on with the case?" the chief asked, when he had finished.

"Did I not tell you? I am acting for the father—for the Marquis de Granlieu."

"Partly for the *marquis*," said the chief, smiling, "and partly for us, aren't you?"

"Of course I've worked too long for the Pointed Tower ever to find myself on the other side of the case. I shouldn't be comfortable. By the way," Mr. Guelpa added, preparing to take his leave, "you will have good men on the case, I am sure. Could you let me have Inspector. Rossignol? Through him you could keep in touch with what I am doing."

THE chief consented readily and rose and held out his hand, but Mr. Guelpa was busy unwrapping a paper parcel. He untied the string, and then, before opening the paper wrapper, looked up at the big chief, his eyes twinkling with satisfaction.

"The body was taken there, I told you, in an automobile—a large, long-bodied car with at least one Hardouin tire. This car entered the Bois by the Auteuil gate. Near the pool, as near as possible to where the body was thrust under the bushes, it left its signature— Eh, look at it, chief!"

Mr. Guelpa removed the paper and held out for the chief's inspection the plaster cast of the tire-mark.

It was not until he had described in detail his discovery of the mark of the wheel that the chief reluctantly let him go. He had accepted Mr. Guelpa's theory without hesitation. Behind what had appeared a simple suicide he saw looming up a dark and complicated crime—a crime not of the lower world of vulgar theft and murder, but one that might touch the highest place of Parisian life. The solution of such a case, he knew, would make his administration famous. Within an hour, five of his best men were at work on the case. His instructions were very simple. Two men were sent out on the motor-car clue. To the others he said,

"Begin at the other end—find out all you can about the life of the Comte de Granlieu, and especially look for the woman!"

Mr. Guelpa did not hear these instructions given to the inspectors who were sent out on the case, but he knew them just as well as though he had. "*Cherchez la femme.*" It is still the rule of the police investigation of crime. And while the keen-witted men of the Pointed Tower set out on the trail of the woman—that eternal police symbol of crime—Mr. Guelpa crossed the bridge to his own quarter and entered the little street of Gît-le-Cœur. He was not surprised to see an automobile at his door or to find the Marquis de Granlieu waiting for him in his study.

"I have waited a long time," said the marquis, "a very long time."

"*Monsieur le marquis*," said Mr. Guelpa, calmly, going to his seat behind the big table, "I have been waiting a lifetime—and the thing I am waiting for has not happened yet. But I am sorry. When I sent you word, I expected to be here earlier."

"You will pardon my impatience. It is hard to wait. And now tell me—my son?"

Mr. Guelpa hesitated. His professional conscience forbade him to go beyond the facts he had discovered, and yet the facts were of value only because they suggested a sinister drama of crime and, it might be, disgrace.

BEFORE sitting down, Mr. Guelpa had laid upon the table a packet in which, carefully enveloped, was the plaster cast he had brought from the Pool of Auteuil. He sat looking at it for a moment in silence and then suddenly confronted the old man.

"You were quite right, Marquis. Your son did not kill himself. I have the proof."

"I knew it!" the marquis exclaimed grimly. "And now I am waiting for you to name the murderer."

"One moment, Marquis. I think you were right when you told me your son did not kill himself. You based that opinion upon your intimate knowledge of his character. Now, once more, from your knowledge of your son's life and your judgment of character, you are going to suggest to me the name of some one you suspect. But I do not think I want to hear that name. Your suspicion will be founded upon—what shall I say?—upon your feelings, upon your personal belief, and it may be justified; but may I ask you to wait? Just at present I do not want to bring your personal equation—if you will pardon me—into the problem. Do you see?"

"I do not see," the marquis answered coldly; "but I presume you have a better reason than the one you have given me—and I can wait. I am very grateful to you, for what you have done. For the rest, I must trust you."

"I think you may, Marquis—you may trust me and the police. You will be pleased to know that they are again at work on the case. Now, there is a name on your lips, and, as I said, I do not wish you to speak it. But will you write it down for me? No; not in your handwriting, if you please. I will put a sheet of paper in this typewriter and perhaps you could print it."

Bending over the typewriter, which was on a stand near the window, the marquis, searching carefully for the letters, printed out a name. Mr. Guelpa did not watch him.

"If you will fold up the paper," he said, "I will place it in this envelope and seal it—so. And now, in a few days, Marquis, I will call upon you. In a few days, I hope—a very few days."

Mr. Guelpa accompanied the Marquis de Granlieu to the street door, but neither spoke save for a parting "*Bonjour.*" When he returned to his study, Mr. Guelpa turned up the electric light over his writing-table, for the day was darkening. He put the sealed envelope containing a typewritten name carefully away in his pocket. For a little while he stood tapping the table with a lead-pencil; at last, still standing, he began to write—in his thin, sloping hand writing—on a small square of letter-paper. What he wrote was this:

Bullet.
Revolver.
Automobile.
Dominique.
Two glasses.
Marks on the parquet.
Élise.

Down-stairs, the house was suddenly filled with crashing music; Madame Guelpa was expending her temperament on the piano. It was significant, and Mr. Guelpa knew it was significant. Julie, coming heavily up the stairs, knocked at his door.

"Come in!" he called out.

Julie entered.

"Mother says, please will you come to dinner?"

"Yes, of course—yes."

The music ceased abruptly. Mr. Guelpa and Julie looked at each other gravely. An instant later, Mrs. Guelpa burst into the room.

She was a magnificent woman—and he

often wondered how he deserved so much magnificence. She was tall; she was dark; she was formidably handsome with her pale face and brilliant eyes and great coils of thick black hair. She radiated temperament. Mr. Guelpa had learned a lot about women from her. At her sudden appearance, he came forward politely.

“My dear,” he began apologetically, “Julie gave me your message and I was just about to descend. I hope I have not kept you waiting.”

“What is that?” she asked, pointing to the square scrap of paper on the table.

“Notes, my dear.”

“And what was your aristocratic friend doing here, Jules-Marie? And where have you been all day? It isn't possible you are going to begin again—at your time of life!”

Mr. Guelpa straightened himself up and tried to look defiantly young.

“Yes; it is quite possible, my dear; but only a small matter—only one little case—for the old Marquis de Granlieu. I can't very well let it go. Justice must be done, and I think I see my way to clear up the case. It is a very bad one, and I am so glad you are taking an interest in it, for you can help me so much. Your judgment, my dear, your intuition——”

“Thank you for my judgment and my intuition,” his wife said, with dignity. “Only, it's a pity I did not make some use of them earlier. When you said you had retired from that awful work, I believed you. And just as I had made all our plans for going away for the summer—and the rooms taken——”

She broke off and stood, a tragic figure, with her hand over her heart.

“Everything you say is reasonable, Hortense,” Mr. Guelpa admitted gravely, “and, of course, I have retired—my successor is in my chair. But this is an exceptional case. It has interested me, and I feel I should like to clear it up—for the sake of the old marquis. Think of that suffering father and mother! Their only son murdered——”

“Murdered? I thought the Granlieu case was a suicide.”

“That is what you and I have to disprove—you and I.” He glanced round the room and added rather feebly, “And Julie.”

“You will never stop work, Jules-Marie,” Mrs. Guelpa said more kindly—almost in a protective way—and she stroked the dapper little man's shoulder affectionately.

“And we shall all have our holiday,” Mr. Guelpa added. “There is a check in the table drawer there from the marquis, and you and Julie shall buy what you want with it and travel like princesses. And when my work is done, I will join you in Normandy.”

“I will take the check, Jules-Marie; it will be better in my hands than in yours,” Mrs. Guelpa replied, with much firmness. “But you need not think Julie and I are going to leave you alone in Paris. And now, if you do not want cold soup, perhaps you will come down to dinner.”

They were moving toward the door when Julie spoke. She was standing by the laboratory table.

“Fa-ather,” she drawled in that placid, bleating way that always exasperated the little man, “here's one of your best handkerchiefs—isn't it, mother?”

“Don't touch anything, Julie, in father's room.”

“I haven't touched anything, but, fa-ather, what are you going to do with the blue dust?”

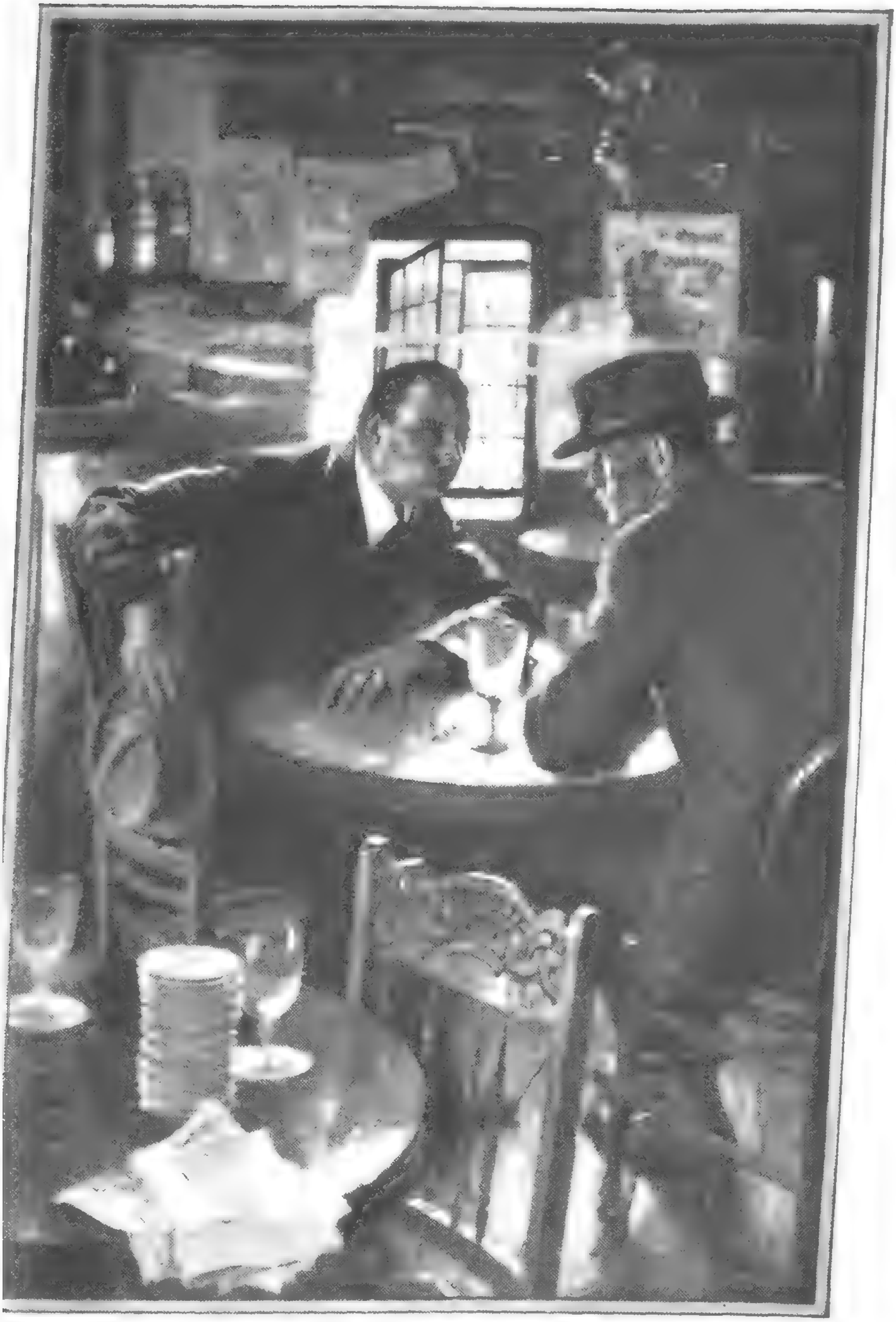
Mr. Guelpa turned round.

“Nothing” he replied; but he bent over the square scrap of paper on the table and wrote: “Pont St. Michel, 9:30 A.M.” Then he put the paper away in his pocket next to the sealed envelope containing the name—the unknown name—the marquis had spelled out on the typewriter. He then gave the magnificent lady his arm, and, followed by the sheeplike Julie, went down to the dining-room.

“SO FEW men see anything, Rossignol,” said Mr. Guelpa.

They were in a taxi-cab driving toward the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas, with the intention of making a further examination of the Comte de Granlieu's apartment.

“Do you remember when Nippert was guillotined? No? Well, I was present with three of my colleagues—magistrates and high police officials. After the execution was over, I asked them casually, ‘By the way, what color were the executioner's gloves?’ The answers were: white, black, gray. The executioner had his hands bare.



"No, no!" Dominique smiled complacently. "However, you must get away. Why don't you go back to England by the night boat?"

It is all a question of seeing, Rossignol, and after you have seen, you may give your imagination a chance, and the bolder your hypothesis the more likely it is to be right. And here we are," he added, as the taxi drew up in front of the house in the rue Boissy-d'Anglas. "I am going to give you a lesson in seeing things—significant things that have haunted me for days. Come in."

HE RANG the bell and the door was opened after a short delay by Dominique, who started slightly as he recognized his visitor. Mr. Guelpa brushed him aside and entered, followed by Rossignol.

"I have come to have another look at the little *salon*. This is Inspector Rossignol, of the *Sûreté*. You will admit no one—or, stay, you will admit any one who calls and notify me at once."

"Yes, sir," said Dominique. "Your hat and stick, sir."

"Never mind my hat and stick. And, I say, Dominique, you may come with us."

Mr. Guelpa, followed by the others, went down the hall toward the little *salon*, the key of which he drew from his pocket. At the door of the room he had taken the precaution to lock so carefully, he stopped in surprise. It stood wide open. The furniture was huddled in a heap in one corner; the rugs were rolled up and parquet floor had been cleaned and waxed. Of what he had come to see not a trace remained. A dark look gathered on Mr. Guelpa's face. He turned to the valet and spoke very softly but very distinctly.

'When I locked this door, in order that the room might not be disturbed, you told me there was no other key except the one I took with me. Now, I not only find the room open but I find that some one has done this—you, I suppose."

"I'm sorry, sir. I had no idea of doing anything wrong," said Dominique, and his face was expressionless as a lump of putty. "Of course I supposed you understood my regular pass-key would open all the doors in the apartment. I regret that I have displeased you."

Mr. Guelpa stared him full in the face for a moment.

'It is all right," he said at last. "You are not very intelligent, Dominique; that is all."

There came into Dominique's fatuous-looking face just a glimmer of self-satisfaction.

"I'm sorry," he repeated.

"Well, you've removed about everything," Mr. Guelpa continued, with another glance at the room, "and now you may as well remove yourself."

"Yes, sir; very well, sir," the valet said briskly.

As he turned to go, he caught sight of a dust-pan on the floor filled with dirt; he stooped and picked it up.

Mr. Guelpa quietly relieved him of it.

'I said remove yourself—not anything else. Now go."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Guelpa waited until the valet had disappeared down the hall; then he carefully closed the door and locked it, leaving the key in place. When he turned to Rossignol, it was with a smile of twinkling satisfaction.

"It may be better as it is," he said. "The destruction of evidence is often as valuable as the evidence itself. It indicates a motive—and some one who had a motive for its destruction. What I wanted you to see were certain footprints on the rug—impressed there by the sharp little heels of a woman's shoe while they were still wet. They led from the door to a sofa that stood about there. But that does not matter much. I know the woman who entered the room that night. And you, Inspector?"

'I'm waiting for you to tell me, sir."

"Patience. There were two liqueur-glasses on a stand near the sofa. They had been used, and of course they bore finger-prints. A woman's? Did she drink from one of them? That would indicate a pleasant, friendly meeting. On the parquet near the door were other footprints. A man's shoes with rubber heels—they had tarnished the bright surface of the floor. He had stood there some time, shifting his place, but never moving far from the spot. These shoes were not wet. The man entered the room before the rain had wet the pavements. A common man probably, or he would not have been kept waiting there, respectfully, by the door. Did he drink out of one of the glasses?

"These are some of the things I brought you here to see. They are gone now, but, fortunately, I saw them, and, when I see a thing, Rossignol, it remains in my mind forever. Don't smile, young man; it is because I have trained my mind to retain them, and one has a right to be proud of what one has taught oneself by years of hard work."

"Of course, sir, and I wasn't smiling at your statement; I was thinking of a lesson you gave me one day on the Pont St. Michel, and wondering what the devil that thing was doing in the dust-pan!"

"What thing? What are you talking about?"

There were tiny flecks of blue in the dirt and rubbish in the dust-pan which Mr. Guelpa still held in his hand. Rossignol stirred the mass of loose rubbish with his finger—a short, blunt finger—and brought to the surface something more solid. It was a fragment of blue chalk, such as billiard-players use.

"And it reminds you of a lesson I gave you that day on the bridge?"

"The message chalked on the parapet."

"It is curious how things link themselves together. Of course, there are millions of pieces of blue chalk in Paris. Still, it is odd to find one here. There were a man and a woman on the bridge, were there not? And the woman left the message for the man. Do you know who else was there, Rossignol? At that very time? You caught me when I was knocked over by a motor-car, you remember? There was some one in that car. A woman. And that woman," said Mr. Guelpa, sinking his voice to a whisper, "was the Comtesse de Granlieu—at half-past nine o'clock the morning after the count's death. First, the woman with the chalk passed, then the man, who tried to obliterate the message written in blue chalk on the parapet, and afterward the countess. A coincidence, Rossignol? Well, I am interested in coincidences. I think I will keep this," he added, putting the chalk away in an envelope he took from his pocket. He glanced round the room, as though studying its disorder; then he turned to the inspector.

"Rossignol," he said, "that valet with the putty face looks like a fool, eh? When a man looks as much of a fool as he does, I am always afraid of him. You see, nobody could be such a fool as he looks, and therefore it is natural to assume that he is not a fool at all. He has been the count's valet for fifteen years. Since he was able to hold that position for all these years, it means he is adroit—very adroit. And you may be sure he knew as much about the count's life as the count himself knew. And this little trick of destroying the evidence in this room—it wasn't done without an object. Do you think you can keep an eye on Dominique and see what he does?"

"He may have left the house already."

"No; he has no reason to think we are interested in him. You will probably find him as near that door as he dares to come. Shadow him, Inspector, and if necessary put another man on him. And if anything comes of it, let me know at once."

As they went out, Dominique appeared in the hall and opened the street door for them. He was gravely obsequious as usual, and Mr. Guelpa gave him a brisk good-by.

"Get into the taxi with me, Rossignol; he might as well see us go away together. I will drop you at the corner, and you can keep an eye on the house. And don't let him get away."

The inspector laughed.

"It would be as easy to lose the Eiffel Tower," he said.

"Well, make sure of him."

Rossignol never felt the need of disguising himself save in the simplest manner, and the means for the disguise he carried always with him. Under his waistcoat he had, folded up, a workman's blouse of the commonest sort and a flat cap. As the cab rolled toward the corner, he drew these from their hiding-place and put them on. His soft hat he buttoned under his waistcoat. He looked now like the thousand and one shabby laborers who might be idling at a wine-shop. With a word of good-by to Mr. Guelpa, he slipped out of the taxi-cab and sauntered back to the rue Boissy-d'Anglas.

DOMINIQUE, dressed in black, respectable, dignified, was just coming from the apartment-house. He did not see the little workman in the flat cap and dingy blouse; he was too commonplace to be seen. After a casual glance to right and left, he walked slowly on, as though he were taking a morning stroll. Rossignol, on the other side of the street, followed at his ease.

Dominique crossed the Rue St.-Honoré and continued toward the Place de la Concorde. At the corner, by the Automobile Club, a number of private motor-cars were drawn up, and there was also a line of taxi-cabs, quiescent, the chauffeurs lounging in the sun. Dominique passed them unheeding, and the little inspector gave a sigh of relief. But at that moment an empty taxi-cab slid out of the Rue de Rivoli. Dominique signaled it, and before it had come to a stop near him, he had nipped into the car and was off—across the Place de la Concorde and out into the broad Avenue of the Champs Elysées. Though taken by surprise, Rossignol was as quick as the man he was following; but it took him a moment to explain matters to the chauffeur of a taxi-cab, for he looked no very desirable customer, and by the time he had driven it into the chauffeur's head that he was of the police, the yellow car and the bulbous valet were already well up the avenue.

"Get on; get on!" Rossignol shouted to the chauffeur.

He had not dared to take a seat with him in front, for he suspected now that Dominique was perfectly aware that he was being followed; but he had lowered the front window and from behind the chauffeur's back was watching the yellow taxi.

"That's it," he said. "Get as close as you can without seeming to follow it."

When they were near enough he made a note of the number; it was a Paris *plaque*, 12,046.

"He certainly knew he was followed," Rossignol said to himself savagely. "He's a cool one—the way he nipped into that cab— Hey, there, chauffeur; quick!"

But the chauffeur was not quick enough. The yellow taxi-cab had turned into the Place de l'Étoile, while Rossignol's car had been halted by a line of tram-cars. A minute or two was lost before they could pass, and when at last they came out on the north side of the *place*, the yellow taxi was not in front of them—or it might have been any one of the hundreds of cars that were cutting away into the six avenues on that side of the *place*. Rossignol fumed and swore.

"Easy, *patron!*" said the chauffeur. "We'll have him. He's taken the Avenue de Wagram—sit steady."

They raced down that avenue in the wake of a yellow cab, but when they came up with it, it bore a different number from the one they sought.

"Enough of this—and too much!" said Rossignol. "Drop me here."

He paid for the taxi; the tip he gave would not have impoverished any one. For a moment the chauffeur thought of mentioning a few things he had in his mind, but the dingy man in the blouse looked too savage to play with, so he contented himself with bursting into derisive laughter as he drove away. The laughter annoyed the little man of the Pointed Tower almost as much as the loss of Dominique. He slouched across the avenue with his head down, muttering to himself, and turned into a small street, where he thought he might find a café modest enough for a workman in cap and blouse. It was the Rue de la Forge. There was a sort of café, and he took his drink standing at a zinc bar. There was only one other customer in the place. He was lolling at a table in the back of the room, his legs outstretched. Rossignol noticed that he had big feet. Indeed, he was a big man; he was well dressed—too well dressed for this shabby drinking-den. He lolled there, apparently half asleep, his hat pulled down over his face, so that only a mustache and a heavy chin were disclosed.

"Dirty pig!" said Rossignol, turning away. "Drunk in the morning."

THE inspector paid for his coffee and went out into the street, taking his disappointment and his vile temper with him. And he strolled on, turning down the avenue toward the Porte Maillot.

Suddenly he stood quite still. A long-bodied, high-powered automobile came down the street, which had just been washed and was still heavy with water. The motor-car turned and swung into a garage, and as it crossed the broad strip of dry sidewalk, it left upon it, clear and distinct, the mark of its tires. And Rossignol saw there were infinite numbers of the letter "H", large and small, endlessly repeated as the tires left their wet imprints on the pavement. These he saw; but what pulled him up with a start was the fact that thrice repeated was a large "H", one side of which had been shorn away. And even as he watched the marks, they began to vanish as the sun licked them up.

Rossignol strolled slowly on. It had been his first thought to enter the garage and make inquiries as to the owner of the car, but he did not wish to rouse suspicion. For the moment, the car was safe. What he needed now was help. As soon as he was out of sight of the garage, he broke into a swift run. In a few moments he was at a public telephone in the avenue, sending his message to the Pointed Tower—a message that brought the placid chief of the *Sûreté* to his feet with a sudden cry of triumph. And Rossignol, too, chuckling with self-approval, went back to the avenue and idled there, keeping an eye on the garage. His thoughts were pleasant; he had gained his own self-approval.

Meanwhile, a soft, sleek man in black, whose puffy face wore also signs of self-approval, walked briskly down the Rue de la Forge and slipped through the door of an obscure and dirty wine-shop and café. A big man rose from a table at the back and said gruffly,

"You want to see me?"

"Yes," said Dominique.

THERE is one smart hotel on the left bank, which, during the war, attained almost diplomatic dignity and, since that time, has attracted many overseas visitors. Mr. Guelpa, as he entered the great *foyer* with its palms and flowers, looked curiously about. Seated in a chair near the lift was a quiet-looking gentleman, diligently engaged in not reading a newspaper; in another chair, near the porter's desk, another equally quiet gentleman was ostensibly studying a time-table. Mr. Guelpa's eyebrows went up.

"It didn't take them long to find the man in the case," he said to himself.

The quiet gentlemen busied themselves in not looking at Mr. Guelpa as he went to the desk and asked for Mr. Faynis.

"That is Mr. Faynis, Sir," said the porter, indicating a tall, youngish man who came strolling through the *foyer*, a number of letters in his hand. Mr. Guelpa crossed the young man's path and mentioned his name.

"I am acting for the Marquis de Granlieu," he explained.

"Ah, yes; I think I know your name. You left your card for the countess the other day, I believe. And now you want to see me? Quite so." And Faynis studied the little man through half-veiled eyes. "Shall we go up to my room?"

"If you please."

The quiet gentlemen with the newspaper and the time-table paid no heed to them as they took the lift and were carried up to the third floor. Faynis opened the door of his apartment and they entered a large *salon* overlooking the street. It was a spacious room, handsomely furnished, and there was a huge vase of fresh roses on the center-table.

"I like flowers," remarked Faynis casually. He gave his visitor a seat and sat down near him.

What Mr. Guelpa was thinking was: "I wonder if I can make that fellow open his eyes—I don't like to be looked at through a veil;" but what he said, very politely, was:

"I presume I need show you no credentials to convince you I am authorized to act for the marquis?"

"Not at all," replied Faynis. "I am only too glad to be of any assistance to him—if I can."

"Possibly you can."

"I hope so."

"It is unfortunate the countess could not see me when I called."

"She is terribly upset by this awful occurrence," Faynis explained, "this suicide."

"Not suicide," said Mr. Guelpa softly; then abruptly he leaned forward and raised his voice. "It was murder!"

The young man's eyes were wide enough open now, and he stared with a growing look of horror. Mr. Guelpa was quite content with the effect he had produced before Faynis recovered his self-control and the eyelids drooped once more over the telltale eyes.

"You have evidence, of course," he said at last.

Mr. Guelpa assented; he explained, as though it were a police discovery, what had been found out at the Pool of Auteuil, emphasizing the point that the count's body had been placed there after death.

"There was no struggle—there was no robbery," he added significantly. "Whoever put him out of the way had another motive. Vengeance?" he asked. "Jealousy? The motive will explain everything."

Faynis was quite self-possessed now.

"Murder." He repeated the word reflectively. "This discovery will be a terrible shock to the countess. It was a shock even to me—a mere outsider."

"No one," said Mr. Guelpa in his precise way, "is quite outside this—this investigation."

"I'm afraid I cannot help much," Faynis answered. "I only arrived in Paris the night of the count's—" He hesitated and added, "The count's death."

"You came on business?"

"For the estate. I am a member of the firm of Faynis, Cleave & Faynis, of New York, and the Ryle estate is in our hands. Mr. Ryle, you know, died two years ago. At the time of his daughter's marriage to the Comte de Granlieu, he settled a very large amount of money on her absolutely. This fortune the count hopelessly involved—it is virtually gone. Before his death, Mr. Ryle, in order to protect his daughter from the count's prodigalities, as well as to provide for any possible children, left his great fortune in trust, the income only to be paid over to the countess. There were other provisions, but under no circumstances could the count touch a penny of it—that is, of the capital—and for any portion of the income he was dependent upon his wife. I may say I am informed that in the last two years he has had that income—and more. And there remains the question of his debts, which are very large. I do not know that our firm will advise their payment. This, in a nutshell, is the situation. Recently matters came to a crisis. The countess was unable—literally unable, for it was not a question of ill will—to meet his demands for money. Shortly after, she cabled our firm, and I was sent over to see what could be done to protect her from the count's creditors and pay certain debts that were pressing her. That, then, is the statement I can make to you. If I have omitted anything that may be helpful, I shall be only too glad to give you further information."

"Precisely—it is very good of you," said Mr. Guelpa. "I do not think of anything—By the way—what time did you reach Paris?"

"About eight o'clock in the evening."

"And you drove at once to this hotel?"

"Yes."

"And you dined here?"

"Yes."

MR. GUELPA drew a small leather note-book from his pocket, glanced at it and then looked attentively at the young man.

"And what time did you see the Comtesse de Granlieu that evening?" he asked gently.

"I did not see her that evening."

Mr. Guelpa made a pretense of consulting his note-book.

"Where did you get the automobile?"

"See here, Mr. Guelpa; you do not need to question me like this. I am perfectly ready to tell you all I know. When I reached this hotel that evening, I dined. Then I had the porter telephone—I presume to the hotel garage—for a motor-car."

"A long-bodied, high powered car?"

"If that interests you, I suppose you can find it in the hotel garage. I was driven to the house in the Avenue Henri Martin. It would be about half-past nine when I got there. The countess was not at home."

"You had not sent her word of your arrival?"

"No; I told the chauffeur to drive about for an hour or so. He suggested Saint Cloud, I think. We drove out through the Bois. But it came on to rain, so I told him to go back to the boulevards; but coming down the Avenue des Champs Elysées, I saw a brilliantly lighted café and told him to stop there. I remained in the café about half an hour or so. I was, of course, extremely desirous of seeing the countess as soon as I could. So I decided to call again late enough to make it possible she would have returned. It might have been eleven o'clock, or possibly half-past eleven. She was still out. I came back at once to the hotel. And that is all. I am glad to give you these facts, though I hardly see they are of importance."

"No; they do not seem important." Mr. Guelpa put away his note-book and took up his little black hat from the chair beside him. "And you did not see the countess until next morning?"

"The next morning, when I called at her house—about nine."

"You had seen the newspapers?"

"I read the shocking news of the Comte de Granlieu's death, and I went to her at once."

"Of course. She was not at home when you reached the house?"

Faynis hesitated.

"No; she arrived soon after—indeed before I left. But would it not be well to ask the countess herself?"

"Perfectly right," Mr. Guelpa replied;

"that is a good suggestion. You see, Mr. Faynis, we knew the count did not kill himself at the Pool of Auteuil. Who killed him? It is through his wife we shall learn who his enemies were—who might have had an interest in his death. The motive, Mr. Faynis, the motive!"

"She will do what she can, I am sure," Faynis said. "And I shall advise her to speak quite frankly to you. Of course, there are many private personal matters that are painful for her to talk of—indeed, that feeling prevented her from speaking openly to the Marquis de Granlieu. She did not wish to pain him, perhaps, by disclosing her situation regarding his son. But now the case is different. Since it is a question of bringing to justice those who have killed the count, she will do all she can to aid you—I am certain. Shall we go together?"

"You will come with me? Admirable!"

"One moment," said Mr. Faynis. "I will have my car brought round—if it is not at the door."

He telephoned to the hotel office while Mr. Guelpa sat nursing his hat.

"It is at the door," said Faynis; "will you come?"

A big touring car was waiting in front of the hotel. Mr. Guelpa glanced quickly at the tires; they did not interest him. As he got into the car, he looked back. One quiet gentleman had just stepped into a low black automobile drawn up near the corner of the boulevard; he bent and spoke to the chauffeur, a keen-looking, youngish man, not in livery. The other quiet gentleman was standing on the steps of the hotel. He caught Mr. Guelpa's eye for a second and then looked away without a hint of recognition.

"The Pointed Tower is busy this morning," thought Mr. Guelpa to himself.

THAT the servants of the Comtesse de Granlieu had told him the truth, Mr. Guelpa did not doubt. It was probable that Joseph and Élise—especially Élise—had given a tolerably faithful account of what had happened. And Mr. Guelpa, allowing always for the due proportion of human error, was inclined to accept Élise's statement as true.

In quite another way he looked upon his conversation with Faynis. Faynis was not an ordinary witness, with the one simple duty of telling the truth. Nor was he, on the other hand, a suspected person who had the right to defend himself by using any weapon of falsehood he could find. He was neither unprejudiced witness nor accused. He was a friend of the countess. Indeed, Mr. Guelpa knew that at one time, before her marriage, he had aspired to be more than a friend. Therefore, his evidence might be expected to be colored with a desire to serve her cause. And, in addition, Faynis was a lawyer; even if he had told the plain truth, Mr. Guelpa reflected, he would tell it with a purpose. Had he been protecting his client? Mr. Guelpa did not for a moment believe the young lawyer had been protecting himself. Yet that, too, was possible. Evidently the *Sûreté* was not acting blindly; these soft-footed gentlemen of the Pointed Tower were not on Faynis's trail for nothing.

As the automobile drew up in front of the house in the Avenue Henri Martin, Mr. Guelpa looked back; the black police car was stopping under the trees further down the avenue and one of the quiet gentlemen stepped out.

"That is Guérin," Mr. Guelpa told himself. "I wish I could have a word with him now—I hope he does not precipitate things."

"Perhaps it would be better," Faynis suggested, "if I saw the countess alone for a moment and told her what you have learned. It will be a great shock to her."

"As you please," replied Mr. Guelpa. And suppose I give you five minutes."

"That will do."

The young man ran up the steps of the great house and was admitted almost at once. Meanwhile, Mr. Guelpa strolled over toward the quiet gentleman.

"What's on, Guérin?" he asked.

"Nothing, Mr. Guelpa; we are only keeping him in sight."

"Hm. Any one in the house."

"Since yesterday. A woman."

"How did you do it?"

"The old servant, Joseph, was good enough to be taken ill, and our doctor ordered a nurse. She's a good one."

"I see. Indeed, Guérin, I do not think I have anything to do here, since the matter is in your hands, but I will look in for a moment—this once. You have found out all about Faynis, I presume?"

"From the time he left the railway station up to this moment—yes."

Mr. Guelpa went back to the house and rang the bell. A young footman opened the door, but Élise was in the hall. She came up to him, and there was something swift and sly about her.

"She is in the little *salon*—with him," whispered Élise.

"Show me in," said Mr. Guelpa. "I am expected."

AS HE entered the room, announced by Élise, he gave one quick glance round before he went forward to greet the Comtesse de Granlieu. The curtains were half drawn. Two small white dogs raced across the floor and, after inspecting him, wheeled and ran back to the sofa where the countess was sitting. She was dressed in black—a scant and simple little frock, which made her look very young, very pale, and in her eyes Mr. Guelpa thought there was a shadow of fear—but this was an impression he mistrusted. It was her seeming youth that surprised him, though he knew she was twenty-five years old. Rumor had not exaggerated her beauty. She was really beautiful—unusually beautiful. In the white oval of her face with dark eyes staring out of it, he thought he read fear, but he did not read weakness there. Under all the youthful beauty and under the deep emotion which had evidently been caused by Faynis's communication, he discerned signs of a character at once resolute and brave.

Faynis spoke.

"I have told the countess the new developments—of the extraordinary developments—of your belief, I mean, that the Comte de Granlieu did not commit suicide. I need not tell you she is deeply shocked. But anything she can do—" He paused.

"Yes," said Mr. Guelpa; "our interest is the same. It is at the request of the Marquis de Granlieu that I have taken up the matter. He was quite sure his son did not kill himself. And he was right. Then, how was he killed? And why? I am deeply sorry, Countess, to intrude upon your grief, but your interest is that of the family, and you share, I am sure, the desire of the unhappy father and mother that this tragic mystery be cleared up."

"I will do what I can," she said slowly.

"Then I may ask a few questions?"

"That would be the better way, perhaps," Faynis put in, "unless you should like me to make a clear statement of what the countess has told me."

"If *madame* would consent," Mr. Guelpa answered calmly, "I should prefer to ask a few questions."

"Very well."

"Then may I ask, Countess, what led to the separation between your late husband and yourself?"

She started and glanced quickly at Faynis. Mr. Guelpa waited.

"I did not know you would ask about that—it is all so personal," she said at last.

"Certainly; but now it cannot be helped," remarked Faynis in his grave voice. "Tell Mr. Guelpa about it—just as you told me, Eva."

Her name had come to his lips unbidden, and he half regretted it, but Mr. Guelpa did not seem to notice that he had called her "Eva."

"Then I will try and explain it," the countess began, and she looked across timidly at Mr. Guelpa; "but it is rather difficult, because, you know, so many things enter into it—the separation. Shall I tell Mr. Guelpa about the money, John?"

"Everything, Eva," he answered; he was glad she had called him frankly by his name.

Once she had begun to relate the story of her married life, she spoke quite readily. It went back to the time of her wedding. The count, at that time, had received a very large sum of money to pay his debts and start him afresh; upon her a fortune—as money was reckoned in France—was settled. It should have enabled them to live lavishly for life. But the count was something more than lavish; he was a waster. He rebuilt the old Château de Granlieu and erected the palace in the Avenue Henri Martin—two rather sane operations. But millions of francs went into his racing-stables; gaming and women ran away with many millions more. Time and again old Mr. Ryle came to the rescue; but after his death rigid trustees held his place. The count, who now had nothing to spend, did not know how to stop spending. Debts piled up. In his perfectly polite way he dragged out of his wife what money he could. There was a sort of hereditary charm in the way he stripped her; generations of his noble ancestors had done the same thing to their wives. And the jewels of the Comtesse de Granlieu went the same way those of the Marquise de Granlieu had often gone. And she did not know how to stop him. There was not much thrift in Eva de Granlieu, but she had inherited a sort of reverence for goods and money. One thing she had clung to was the tiara—the historic de Granlieu jewels—which the marquis and his wife had given her upon her wedding-day. Somehow, it seemed to be a symbol of all she had thought her splendid marriage would be to her in life. It was the symbol of Granlieu, the symbol of race. In a way she felt her honor was bound up in it. How, in the generations, it had come and gone like a shuttle between the heads of the house of Granlieu and the usurers she could not know. For her, it was the symbol of Granlieu, which she must guard. So when the count one day asked for it, she refused.

"IT WAS in the safe in my bedroom," she said, "and he opened the safe—I do not know how he opened the safe—and took it. He pledged it with Mr. Dufrène, of the Rue de la Paix. It was this that led to our final separation. And it was this," she added, "I telegraphed to my New York lawyers—and Mr. Faynis was sent."

"And the tiara?" Mr. Guelpa asked.

The question was inconsequential; it was quite by chance he asked it.

"Mr. Dufrène let me have it," she replied, "for the Dubrowski ball. Of course he knew I would return it. So he lent it to me for that one evening. I was to send it back to him the next day."

She spoke quickly, as though she wanted to get it over.

"Then at the Dubrowskis'—you see, I was wearing the tiara—I did not want to appear at the ball without it—and then, unexpectedly, I met the count. I had not seen him since our separation, for he had gone away angry. He smiled when he saw me, and I was afraid. I dared not refuse when he asked me to go into the conservatory with him. He wanted to know how I got the tiara, and when I said Dufrène had lent it to me, he told me I was not telling the truth—but I was!" she exclaimed, appealing to Faynis. "Then the count told me that I must give it to him—that it was a family jewel—that it had been given to me not personally but as one of the family. He said he would take me home after the ball and then I must give it to him. I refused again and again. How could I? I had given my word to return it to the jeweler. And so I refused and refused—and left him."

"When did you see your husband again?"

"Perhaps I can answer that question for her," said Faynis, "if you will permit me. She has told me the facts. She returned to this house alone. As the safe had once been opened without her consent, she did not place the tiara there. She put it in a drawer of her dressing-table. And she fell asleep. She was wakened by a light in her room. The count stood there, smiling at her. In his hand he held the case containing the tiara. He was very polite, she informs me, very cold and perfectly at ease. When she started to ring the bell for her maid, he said: 'Why should you bring the servants into this? The tiara belongs not to you but to de Granlieu. Therefore, I take it.' He left the house quietly, as he had come, unseen by any one."

"Unseen by any one," Mr. Guelpa repeated softly, "of course—he could always enter his own house. And then?"

"I tried to get it back—every way I knew," said the countess. "Mr. Dufrène kept telephoning me—again and again. It was almost as though he knew I did not have it—or the money to repay him. It was like the menace of a frightful scandal. And all day I could not find my husband. I did not see him until the following evening."

"At his apartment?"

"Yes," she said, with a look of surprise.

"It was the evening of the night he was killed? Between half-past nine and ten o'clock?"

"Yes."

"And the count?"

"There was an automobile waiting, and he met me at the door as though he were just going out. He had his coat and hat."

"But he turned back and went with you into the *salon?* You took a seat on the sofa? And then?"

"My husband told me he had sold the tiara, once for all—that it was gone for good. I was faint—I was almost ill—with disappointment and with shame. I did not know how I could explain it to the jeweler without telling him the truth—and the scandal of the truth would be horrible for me and for the poor old marquis and for all of us. I was faint and ill."

"And you drank a glass of liqueur?"

"No, no! Of course not! I went toward the door. And when the count saw how weak I was, he helped me. And when he saw I had no car, he said he would take me home. He was very quiet and kind, but I was afraid of him—I don't know why."

"Did the count drive the car himself?"

"No; there was a chauffeur."

"One of the count's servants?"

"I did not notice."

"Did the count speak to you?"

"Only to say he hoped I was better."

"And he brought you home here?"

"Only to the gate. He reentered the car and drove away."

"And you entered the house?"

"Not then—I did not go into the house then."

"Where did you go?"

"I went to see Mr. Dufrène—at his home in Auteuil. I thought he should know at once that the tiara was gone. I wanted to reassure him—to tell him I would get the money from America," she explained; and she held her head high and looked Mr. Guelpa straight in the eyes.

"Of course," he replied; "that was quite natural. You went in a cab?"

"I could not find a cab. It was such a bad night. I walked to the Trocadéro, and there I took a tram to Auteuil."

"That is where Mr. Dufrène lives? In Auteuil?"

"Yes; in the Rue Molitor. It is a small villa. But he was not at home. No one seemed to be in. So after ringing a number of times, I went away. I could not find a taxi-cab. Finally I found a horse-cab and I was driven home."

"It was late?"

"Nearly midnight," the countess answered, and, as though exhausted, she leaned back among the cushions.

Faynis was the first to speak.

"The countess has told you frankly what she did that evening. I can understand that it seems to you rather unfortunate during those two hours—say from ten o'clock to midnight—she was alone. It might be possible to find the cabman who drove her home, but it is not probable. I am stating the case for you, Mr. Guelpa, as you seem to think it necessary to know where the countess was that evening. Of course, now you do know; but there is no one—except the countess—to tell you that the Comte de Granlieu drove her to the gate of this house at about ten o'clock; there is no one—except the countess—to tell you where she was until midnight, when she entered this house. That is quite clear, is it not Mr. Guelpa?"

"Quite clear. You have omitted one question I meant to ask."

"Yes?"

"The revolver found by the count's body was his own. But it did not come from his apartment. When he moved into the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas, he left it here."

The countess started forward.

"My God!" she exclaimed.

Faynis laid his hand gently on her arm and restrained her.

"That may be quite true, Mr. Guelpa, but he had many opportunities of taking it—for instance, the night he stole his wife's jewels."

"You put it harshly," Mr. Guelpa said; "but your suggestion should be taken into account."

HE LOOKED at Faynis over the top of his little eye-glasses; then he glanced at the white-faced woman, whose look of horror showed she had just begun to realize how dark a road she had to travel. There was fear in her face and horror.

"Countess, I do not want you to misunderstand the situation for one moment," he said, with an emphasis that caught her attention at once. "The facts are there. The only question is how to interpret them. Both you and Mr. Faynis were somewhere in Paris that night. Where you were I wanted to know—and you have told me." He stood up and went toward her. "And, frankly, I am glad you have told me the simple truth. It is always so easy not to tell the simple truth. You are beginning to trust me a little, are you not?" he asked, meeting her frightened eyes.

"I will try," she said.

"Had you thought of leaving the house to-day?"

"I hadn't thought."

"Then don't go out." He bowed over her hand and went to the door. Faynis followed him and asked in a low voice,

"The house is watched?"

"Inside and out."

Faynis's face darkened and, with a short good-by, he went back into the room.

Élise was no longer in the hall as Mr. Guelpa went toward the front door. A valet in the dark-blue livery of de Granlieu opened the door for him.

"It's all right, sir," whispered the detective in blue, looking more like a valet than if he had been born to it. "I have a note for you." He slipped a small envelope into Mr. Guelpa's hand.

As he passed through the iron gates, Mr. Guelpa saw an automobile stationed in the avenue, and two men were idling under the trees. He signaled for his own cab to draw up and, while waiting, opened the envelope and read the message. It was in Rossignol's boyish handwriting and said:

> One minus. One plus. Lost Dominique. Found car.

DOMINIQUE looked round the little café. It was empty at this hour save for the man behind the bar and the tall man, who, upon his entrance, had risen from the table.

"Can we talk here?" Dominique asked.

"Well enough," said the other gruffly, and he resumed his seat by the table; "but order something to drink."

"Order what you want," the valet replied. "I'll take a glass of coffee."

The other called for rum and water. When it was brought, he drained the glass.

"That has done me good," he announced, as he wiped hiss andy moustache. "Now, what is it?"

Dominique drew his chair closer.

"I see you are wearing the same shoes," he said.

"What's that to you?"

"Well, those rubber heels are rather conspicuous, though I suppose they are common enough in London," Dominique answered, "and I told you about that old ferret who came to the flat the other day. Those rubber heels of yours left marks on the floor, and he had his eyes on them. I rubbed them out. But he's a vindictive old ferret, and you never know. That is why I suggest, Mr. Heldon," the valet went on, "that you had better change your shoes."

Heldon rapped on the table and ordered another rum and water. When it was brought, he drank and set the glass down in front of him.

"All right," he said gruffly. "Anything else?"

"You've kept away from your own quarters, I hope?"

"Yes."

."You've not seen her?"

"No; but I've heard from her."

"How?" Dominique asked.

"That's none of your infernal business."

"Well, as long as there's no risk in it."

"Risk?" repeated Heldon. "I don't know."

"Anyway, I've told you—it's you they are trying to find. The old ferret came back again with a young ferret—a cheeky young ferret, that one. I don't think they found anything, but you can't tell. So I came at once to let you know."

"And I suppose," Heldon growled, "they came along at your heels."

"No, no!" Dominique smiled complacently. "The young ferret tried to follow me, but I lost him on the way. He is probably running up and down the streets, but he is not here. However, you must get away. Why don't you go back to England by the night boat?"

"Where is the money?"

Dominique stiffened.

"I'm doing this for your sake—not for mine. It's nothing to me if you're locked up in the *Santé* or thrown in the river. I haven't any money for you. I've done all I could in coming here to warn you that the police are interested in your damned shoes. And I advise you to get out."

With this, Dominique stood up, but his hand went to his pocket and he laid a few francs in paper money on the table—twenty or thirty, perhaps.

"You can have this," he said; "but you ought to know where to get money. You're not alone in the world," he added meaningly.

Heldon glanced at him, but said nothing. He drank the rest of his rum and water and then went to the door with Dominique.

"You mean well, I suppose, and you can't help your beastly disposition; but I know one thing: If it is easy for me to go to London, it is just as easy for me to come back. Do you understand that?"

"I understand," returned Dominique, "and you may do as you please—I only came to tell you the ferrets were out and it's you they are looking for. Good-by, Mr. Heldon."

Dominique half opened the street door, slipped his fat body through it and hurried off. Heldon went over to the bar and paid his score.

"I'm in funds again, Gustave," he said.

"Pompous old ass!" the bartender remarked.

"He's a flunky," Heldon answered contemptuously.

KEYED up by the drink he had taken, he stood erect—a tall, handsome man, with sandy-colored hair and reckless blue eyes. He was not yet thirty years old, apparently—a daredevil, rakish man, attractive in his way and formidable. Gustave, who admired this Englishman's capacity for strong drink—which he deemed man's noblest attribute—was his friend; moreover, he had a suspicion that Heldon was not quite straight. This only added to his friendly admiration, for Gustave, like most of his trade, had no horror of crookedness—in fact, crime delighted him. It meant money; for there was always money to be made out of a crook, either by aiding him or by selling him to the police. So Gustave, suspecting the big Englishman, admired him, nourished him—and waited his turn.

Heldon, leaning over the bar, looked the little man straight in the eyes. On the spur of the moment he decided Gustave was to be trusted.

"I'm going to get under cover for a while," he said; "a silly business. There'll be five hundred francs in it for you if you help me."

"Let's hear it."

"I want you to go to the garage and get the car—I'll give you an order for it—and then drive to the flat—you know where I live—with a note for the missus. That's all. You'll come back here with her answer—and with the car, of course."

"And the five hundred?"

"You'll be paid before I step into the car."

Gustave nodded. He went to the back and summoned a slatternly woman to take his place at the bar, while Heldon wrote an order for the car to the manager of the garage and, on a card he had taken from the bar, a message to his wife. The card on one side bore the name and address of the café; on the other side, which was blank, he scrawled a few lines.

"This means five hundred for you," said Heldon, as he handed Gustave the note. "You'll be as quick as you can."

Gustave's answer was to clap on his hat and run out. He went briskly into the garage and gave up his order for the car. What he did not notice was a small man in cap and blouse lounging across the way. And Rossignol, in his cap and blouse, did not notice Heldon's messenger, for his mind was on a big automobile with a scarred tire. He dared not go away from the garage and, in spite of his urgent telephone message to the Pointed Tower, the police had not come to his aid. So the little man fumed and watched the door of the garage.

Suddenly a car ran out, crossed the sidewalk and turned up the avenue. By the time Rossignol had made certain it was the car he was watching—the car with the scarred tire—it had already got a fair speed on. Crouching over the wheel was a man he knew. He never forgot a face. But where had he seen that shrewd, bad, unclean face, and when? In a flash, he remembered. He had seen it that morning—behind the bar in the dingy café, where he had drunk his coffee. Even as he thought of these things, he was running. He looked in vain for a taxi. Running in the gutter and running fast, he followed the car, losing ground every second—and losing breath. He was just about to give up the chase when, glancing over his shoulder, he saw a low black automobile coming down the middle of the road. With a gasp, he swung himself aboard it. He had just enough breath to cry out:

"Follow that car! Softly!"

It was Guérin, the gentlemanly man of the *Sûreté*, who pulled him into the back seat. With him were four inspectors.

"Is that the car?" Guérin asked.

Rossignol nodded; he was saving his breath.

Rossignol told him how quite by chance he had seen the man in the café. Meanwhile the car they were following finally turned into a small side-street and stopped in front of a rather mean-looking apartment-house. Gustave got out and glanced about, but he saw no one save a man in working-clothes who was crossing the street. The police car, which had not turned the corner, was not in sight. No sooner had Gustave entered the house than Rossignol slipped across the street and posted Guérin and his men so they could watch the house. Then he followed Gustave. The house porter was in the hall, and Rossignol said one word to him: "Police."

"Who was that man who just went up?" he asked sharply.

"I don't know," replied the porter, "but he asked for Heldon's flat—it's on the top floor."

"Is he in?"

"I haven't seen him, but the wife is there."

Who Heldon was, what he did, the porter did not know, he averred; he was an Englishman, free with his money. Rossignol asked a dozen impatient questions and got no further. He was still questioning the man when he heard footsteps coming down the stairs. He ran out and signaled Guérin and his men to keep out of sight. Then he lounged across the street into a hallway. Gustave came out, carrying a yellow bag. With him was a woman. Without a word she turned toward the avenue, walking slowly. Meanwhile Gustave took his place in the car, and as it swung round the avenue, the police automobile—with Guérin and two detectives—followed it at a distance. Two others somewhere in the avenue were waiting to take up the chase of the woman with Rossignol.

SHE seemed quite unperturbed. She might have been a governess out for a stroll, a housewife out shopping. She was quietly dressed. She wore a little black frock and a jacket with a bit of cheap fur, low shoes and a small black toque. And with the change of costume there had come over her, as it were, a change of personality. She looked small and humble, and timid and good. She walked without haste to the avenue, and near the corner paused and looked into a shop window. In order, it may be, to see better, she raised a pair of lorgnettes with gilt rims and large glasses. For a second or two she stared through them, and then, as though satisfied, she turned away. It was at the instant she turned that a taxi-cab passed. She jumped into it, almost before it halted, and ordered the man to drive to the Trocadéro. On the way, she leaned out of the window once or twice and scanned, through the lorgnettes, the road ahead, but she did not look back to see if she were followed. At the Trocadéro she changed to a tram-car; and again to the underground; finally to another tram—she had made a long and wide détour, but it had not taken much time. She gained the Rue de Provence on foot and, after glancing round, entered a shop.

As she looked round she saw no one. Had she hesitated a moment longer before entering, she might have seen a breathless little man in a blouse turn the corner. The little man waited until one of the detectives—the other had been lost *en route*—joined him. Then he went toward the shop. It announced itself as an antiquary's, and the windows were filled with discolored pictures, fragments of old lace, old spoons and forks, marine-glasses. Behind a counter made of glass cases, filled with sham jewelry, revolvers, pieces of embroidery, watch-cases, knives and similar rubbish, a lank old man waited. His head was bald, and a long, dirty beard hung like moss over the lower part of his face. The shop was dark, and he peered at the woman with his old eyes for some time before he recognized her. Then he gave a little sigh of satisfaction.

"Come into the back room," he said. "I'll send Hester to watch the shop."

And when Hester, a voluminous old woman, had crowded in behind the counter, the dealer in all things old and evil led the way to the room behind—a fetid little place. At a table covered with a greasy cloth they sat down.

"What is it, my dear?" the old man asked.

He had not shut the door into the shop. She got up and closed it and, before sitting down, lifted her skirt and took something from her stocking. It was a handkerchief, folded square. Leaning well over the table, she opened it and took out a large, flat diamond that, even in the dingy room, caught up a bluish glory of light.

The dealer stared. His heart beat fast and his breath came quick.

"Oh, my dear!" he whispered hoarsely. "What a girl you are, Viola—what a girl you are!"

"You'll have to speak quick," she said. "There is to be no bargaining, you understand. Take it or leave it—I want five thousand francs in five minutes."

Tears came to the old man's eyes.

"You are mad, Viola!" he exclaimed.

She spoke again in the same quiet, determined way.

"Five thousand in five minutes. You know well enough what it is worth. I'm only taking what I need."

There was a clock on the wall. She fastened her eyes on the blunt minute-hand.

"My dear, my dear——"

"One minute has gone," she said softly.

The great diamond, gleaming even in the dusk, lay on the palm of her gloved hand; the old man's eyes ached with love for it.

"Two minutes—three——"

With a sigh that shook his body, he rose and went to a mysterious corner behind a screen.

Before the five minutes had elapsed, the dealer shuffled out from behind the screen. He laid three thousand francs on the table. She rose quickly, without a word, and turned toward the door. One hand held the diamond; the other had gone swiftly to the pocket of her jacket.

The old man's face was pallid with avarice; her face was cold and dangerous.

"Four," he said hoarsely.

She approached the door and did not even turn to answer him.

He gave a great groan—as though a knife had been turned in his vitals—and gasped, "Here it is, Viola—all of it!"

She went back to the table and, without touching it, counted the money he had spread out on the greasy cover. She threw down the diamond and took up the money. As she did so, she caught the look on his face. It was a look of treachery and murder—an evil look. For a second she studied that face of avarice and crime; then suddenly, as she stooped and put the money in her stocking, she laughed aloud.

"Don't forget. You can injure me, but I can injure you a hundred times more."

"Oh, my dear, my dear—such a thought! Why, you are a good girl—and we'll do business again, many times, eh?"

Viola only laughed.

The diamond over which the dealer gloated still lay on the table. The money was in Viola's stocking; she went toward the door, still smiling. Suddenly there was a wild outcry from the shop; it was the fat woman screaming. Viola gave one swift look round the room and turned the key in the door; then she backed away quickly. The old man screamed also—it was an awful cry of avarice and terror—and threw himself across the table, clutching the diamond to his breast. The door was tried, then angrily shaken, and at last, under repeated blows, it was broken open and Rossignol with the detective burst in. They found the old man crouching over the table, clutching the diamond and groaning: "It's mine! It's mine!" Rossignol leaped on him and held him fast. There was no one else in the room.

QUIETLY, looking neither to left nor right, Viola traversed the Rue de Provence and came out on the boulevard. She was still a trifle breathless, but she showed no signs of emotion, although she had never been nearer disaster than when the detectives broke into the little back room. There had been small time for thought. She had darted behind the screen in the hope of hiding for a moment—of getting rid of the money—she knew not what. Then she discovered a small door fastened with a bolt. She shot the bolt and slipped out into the corridor, which led to a kitchen with a window opening on the courtyard. She was through the window and out in the street before Rossignol had ceased choking the old man. And then she walked quietly until she found a taxi. She made sure she was not being followed, and gave the address of the café in the Rue de la Forge—where her man was waiting. She must get there first—before those hounds of the Pointed Tower had run him down. But she did not urge the chauffeur to make greater haste; she could take no chances. She was not easily daunted, as one might read in her steady gray eyes. Life had trained her to some purpose, though not to the one of which she had dreamed in her schoolgirl days. They were long ago.

Her father's death had sent her out into the world. She had been for a while that disastrous thing called a governess. Then, like a god pouring gold into her lap, the Comte de Granlieu came into her life. That narrow, handsome face, his laughter and his charm opened heaven for her. This heaven was an apartment in Paris so sumptuous that she used to walk about it as one walks vaguely in a dream. She fitted into it perfectly, as a jeweled weapon fits into a sheath. For a year life went on training her. She knew the wild Paris wherein the Comte de Granlieu reigned in his lavish way—life of the race-track and the midnight restaurants and the fierce dance-rooms; and she learned to hold her own and to fight for her own hand.

When the count began to treat her with disquieting politeness—a sign of approaching boredom—she knew what was coming. What else could she expect? Calmly she planned a campaign of which her young, slim, blond beauty was to be the heavy artillery. There were grim resolutions in her little blond soul as she set out to face a world filled—as she saw it—with wolfish men. She accepted the count's money—it was a large sum. And the ornate flat, including the huge silver bathtub, was all her own. She took with both hands, and then she and the count, bored but polite, parted charmingly. All that night she dreamed of wolfish men—and her war of extermination—and she got up in the morning in a mood at once hard and victorious. She took her usual canter in the Bois at eleven o'clock, but for the first time she was one of those whose eyes rove in quest of prey. Old generals riding hard-trotting horses to keep down flesh looked at her with senile approval. She was as proud and dainty as the young mare she rode—and had better control of herself; for opposite Longchamps the mare, suddenly startled by a motor-car, bolted. A rein snapped and she lost a stirrup. Another minute would have seen her under the mare's hoofs when a big horse, galloping fast, ranged alongside of her and a strong arm swept her out of the saddle and held her.

"Kick loose your foot!" an angry voice shouted; and then she was in a man's arms—against his breast—and the galloping horse was being pulled to a standstill.

She had met James Edgar Heldon, and life went on training her—for what mysterious end she did not know; for this was love. She had meant to make war, and instead love took her and crowned her and hung charms on her and covered her with flowers and rolled her in the dust.

Heldon had come over from England a few years before when the Comte de Granlieu had set up his racing-stables at Maison-Lafitte. Viola had often seen him there. And he was still in the count's employ that morning he plucked her off the back of the frightened mare. He had recovered her mount and ridden back with her to her gilded flat. Conversation was not easy. Heldon had seen her often, at Maison-Lafitte, in the Bois, and there had grown up in him that grim, faithful fondness which, when it takes hold of an Englishman, never lets him go. Heldon had hardly expected he would ever speak to this gilded woman; he loved her with the grim sincerity that was part of his nature—and hated her way of life, her laughter, even as he hated the smiling count who dragged her about in triumph. Sitting in her ornate *salon* that morning, he told her these things in a quiet, sulky way. And Viola looked at him—at his strength of body—as one who comes out of a dream. This, she knew, was a man; and he was telling her grimly, almost forbiddingly, that he loved her. His eyes were honest; they were frank. And this love he offered her seemed very different from the purring politeness of the gold-headed Comte de Granlieu.

"Take it or leave it," Heldon had said; "but you'll have to marry me. I won't have a woman about that I don't love well enough to marry."

She remembered—for it was of this she was thinking as the taxi-cab carried her toward Porte Maillot and the little café where her man waited—that the wooing had been almost as simple as this. She had taken off her riding-clothes and, dressed in gray, returned to the *salon*, where Heldon waited, patient as a stone. She had in her hand a gold bag with her money and jewelry in it. He took it away from her and threw it on the floor.

‘You've done with all that," he said, and took her in his arms and kissed her.

She clung to him and whispered,

"Thank God, I don't have to pretend any more!"

THEY were married in a few weeks, and life went on training them. Heldon had given up his job in the count's racing-stables. He could not find another. Viola had nothing but expensive habits, her wits—which were keen—and a love for her man, which grew stronger every day. Now and then Heldon had a good day at the races. Not often. He and luck did not get on well together. When a horseman comes down to driving a motor-car for a living, he has not much further to fall. Heldon got such a job with one of these book-makers, who, in spite of the law, carry on business successfully at race-courses near Paris—Jandel was one of the biggest of these illicit book-makers. Always he was on the frontier of illegality—on the edge of crime—and where he went, Heldon went stolidly, keeping his heart up by taking too much drink. Moreover, Viola followed, with a certain pride, her man. Perhaps she was not unhappy; life quivered with excitement, with unexpectedness; she had the big man who loved her—and she loved him.

These were the things that passed through her mind as the taxi-cab raced toward the Rue de la Forge, where Heldon waited for her. She paid off the cab in the avenue. There was a back way into the café, through an alley and a courtyard. She walked slowly, her lorgnettes held to her eyes. She did not look back. But in the adventurous life of the last year or so, Viola had learned that danger rarely comes to meet one face to face. Therefore she carried her lorgnettes, for in one of the glasses a tiny fragment of looking-glass was inserted. She saw what was lying in wait in front of her, and as well what was approaching from behind.

Nothing. The alley was empty. She slipped into a hall that led to the billiard-room of the café, a low room with four tables, and benches round the wall. It was empty. She went to the green curtain that separated it from the bar. Pushing the curtain aside a little, she saw Heldon; he was lounging over a table, a glass of rum and water at his elbow.

"Jim!" she whispered.

In spite of his sleepy attitude, the man must have been keenly alive to every sound. He got up and lounged back through the curtained doorway to the billiard-room.

WHEN he saw Viola, he straightened up and went toward her with a smile on his lips. They knew each other so well, these two, that many words between them were not necessary. His eyes questioned her, and by way of answer she stooped and took the money from its hiding-place. He counted the money and pushed back part of it into her hand. She took it mechanically and put it in her dress. And always he watched her with understanding eyes. Nine people out of ten resemble their associates, and Heldon, going down-hill, had grown like the swell mob he traveled with; but the best thing in him was his love for Viola, and it had never changed.

"Steady on, old girl," he said; "you've had a bad time of it."

He drew her close to him and held her.

"You must be off as quick as you can," she whispered. "I had just made the deal and got the money when the police broke in. I got away and I don't think I was followed—but, for God's sake, darling, go!"

"Not without you, old girl!"

"And have us both caught! Oh, Jim! They are not on to you yet, and if you can get to England——"

"Of course I can, now that I've got money. I have the car outside, and I'll drive straight through to Dieppe—with you."

She threw herself on him and kissed him again and again.

"Dear man, if you get away, you can save us both. Don't you see? And don't worry about me. They'll never get me; but you must go."

He did not argue any more. He kissed her, and then stood for a moment with his hands on her shoulders, looking down into her white, resolute face.

"You're a good pal," he said softly, "old dear, old dear——"

But she was listening to the noise from the café beyond, where customers, loud in their cups, were drinking. There was nothing to waken her suspicion, but she felt as though they were being watched by unseen eyes.

"Where is the car?" she whispered.

"Gustave is waiting at the head of the alley. Tell Jandel I will leave the car at Dieppe."

She nodded; then she crept to the back door and looked out. She saw no one in the courtyard.

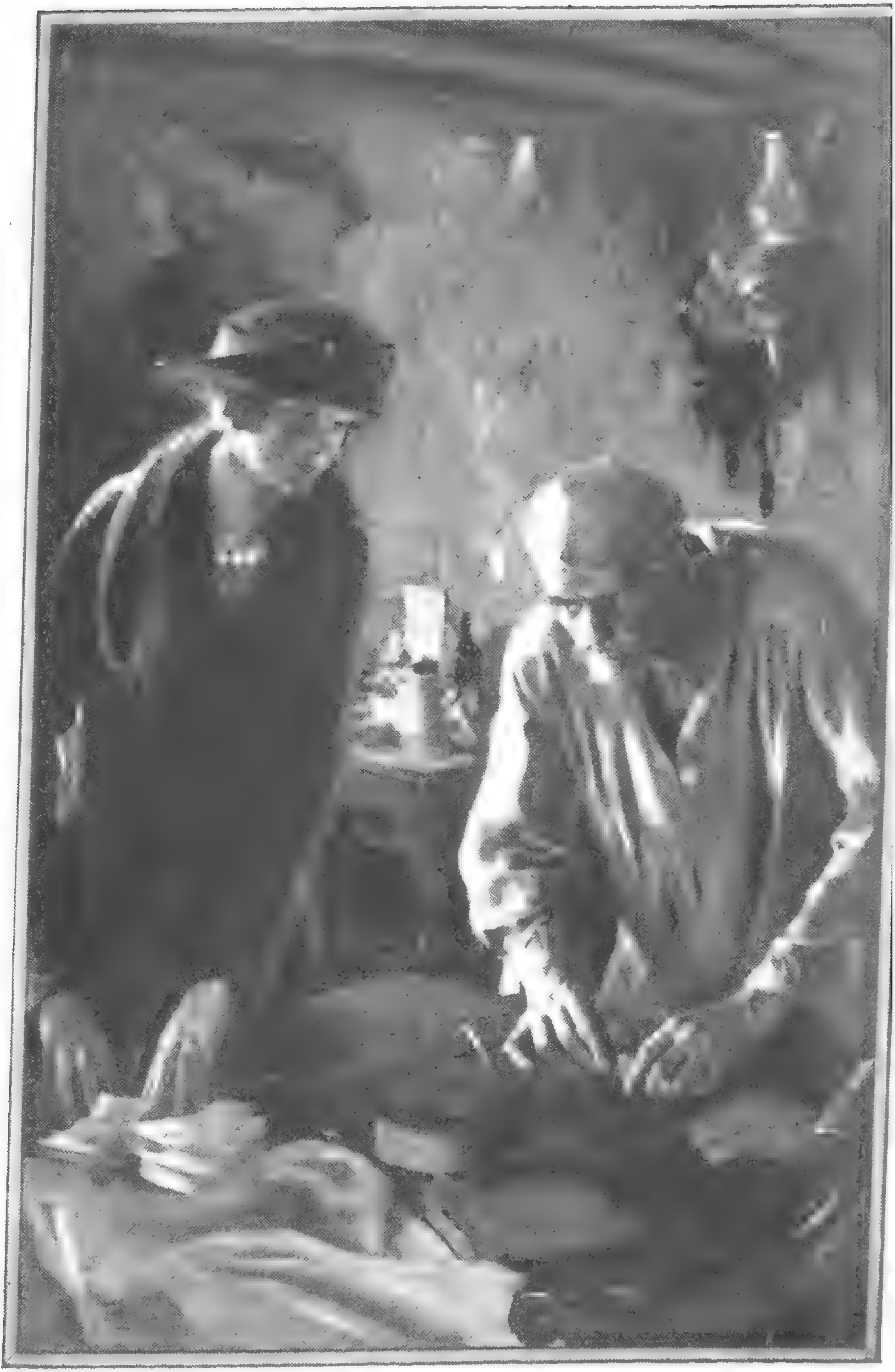
"Go now," she said; "quick, quick!"

"I don't like it," Heldon insisted. "Damn it—we can try it together, Viola—come!"

'And ruin us both? Oh, will you ever go—dear, dear man?"

"I don't like it," he repeated doggedly. But she would not listen to him and pushed him toward the door.

"All right, Viola." He kissed her fiercely and went out. His keen eyes searched the courtyard. No one; and he passed on



He gave a great groan—as though a knife had been turned in his vitals—and gasped, "Here it is, Viola—all of it!" She went back to the table and counted the money.

through the small door into the alley. It was a private right-of-way, and no traffic passed through it. It was empty save for an old beggar in rags who was raking for food in a garbage-can and did not look up. At the head of the alley the big motor-car with the scarred tire stood, Gustave sitting at the wheel. Confident that he was unfollowed and unseen, Heldon strode swiftly up the alley toward the car.

"Here you are!" he said, giving Gustave the money he had ready for him in his hand. "Is there plenty of gasoline? Good—and thanks, Gustave!"

And as Gustave got out, Heldon started to slip into the driving-seat. And what happened then happened so fast that the very sky seemed to rain down policemen—that the very earth seemed to vomit up detectives. They were in front of the car and behind it and around it. Three big inspectors leaped into the tonneau of the car and seized Heldon, bending back his powerful neck until they almost broke it over the back of the seat. Others gripped his arms and clung to his legs. And Rossignol, crowding into the front seat, drove a hard little fist into his ribs again and again. Heldon crumpled up, gasping for breath. In a moment the handcuffs were on him and his legs were strapped up. So sudden had been the attack that he had had no chance to use his huge strength or draw his revolver.

They lugged Heldon's big body over the back seat and laid it on the floor of the automobile. The man had not spoken. He said nothing now. He lay breathing heavily, his face contorted with anger and pain.

"Did you take the other fellow?" Rossignol asked.

"I can get him any time," replied Guérin, to whom he had spoken. "He's the *patron* of the café yonder—and he's watched."

"And the woman?"

"What woman?"

"You haven't got her?" cried Rossignol. He swore impatiently and jumped out of the car. "Here," he added; "take this car and the prisoner to the Pointed Tower and tell the chief I'll be there as soon as I can."

The big car, followed by the police automobile, was driven away. Heldon, cramped and tortured, lay on the floor; a grim smile had come to his lips when he heard the "woman" had not been taken. So long as she was free, what did it matter?

The motor-car, with Heldon, handcuffed and bound, lying on the floor, was driven to the *Sûreté*—to the grim house of the Pointed Tower.

THERE is not in the world such a band of crime-hunters as the Brigade of the *Sûreté*. Its prestige is ancient. Its record is one of shrewdness, daring and devotion. Vidocq's bold exploits are part of its tradition, and he was, in fact, its first chief. That was long ago, but almost all of his successors have been keen men-hunters with a dash of Vidocq's gay humor and relentless energy. It is not a large force. There is Vadecard, the chief, bearded, soft, fat, with sleepy brown eyes—but his sleepiness is that of a volcano, and fierce tempers flash out of him every now and then. Under him are two assistants, a half-dozen chief inspectors, thirty brigadiers or so and three hundred detectives, commonly called "inspectors." But there is one special section of the Brigade of the *Sûreté* known and feared wherever crime runs in the dark. There are rarely more than two score detectives in this section. Picked men all, they are under the direct command of the chief. They are the élite of the secret police. They are the hounds that have pulled down all the great criminals of France. Adroit, relentless, fearless—gambling their lives against criminal odds—they are soldiers enlisted in a bitter and unending war. And what is strange is that they have as fine a sense of honor as any soldier in one of the chivalrous armies of the world. And Rossignol, always gay, always fearless, was just a trifle more chivalrous than the grimmer inspectors of the brigade. Heldon, lying in the bottom of the car, his ribs sore from that little man's violent fist, was hating Rossignol with dogged determination; but, had he known it, he might have fallen into worse hands.

The motor-car was driven into the court and the gate clanged behind it. Heldon was hauled out. His legs were unbound, and two detectives hurried him down a long corridor into a small room where a brigadier sat at a table.

"Your name?" the brigadier growled.

"James Edgar Heldon."

"English?" Heldon nodded. "Speak!" roared the brigadier.

"Yes."

"Age?"

"Thirty."

"Height? Weight?"

Heldon gave his height and weight; he was six foot two and weighed one hundred and seventy pounds.

"Take him away."

Heldon turned, and the detectives took him by the elbows and ran him down the corridor to the office of the *Grande Permanence*—that old and dingy room which is the most rueful spot in Paris. It is the clearing-house of crime and misery.

And there Heldon waited his turn. His big jaw was set; his eyes looked straight ahead of him. He was as quick of body as he was slow of brain, but here he was helpless. The only hope he had was in Viola's freedom. Had she escaped? He told himself that if she had escaped, he did not much care.

Once more his name was taken and, always guarded by the same detectives, he was led on to the *dépot*. There he was left in his cell. How many hours went by he did not know—a night, a day— He was fed a vile soup and given water to drink. Then, in those desolate hours, Rossignol came into his cell. The little man was blithe and smiling; he was smoking a cigarette.

"I hope you don't bear malice," he said, "for that punch in the ribs." Heldon glared at him and did not answer. "You see, you're a big fellow, and I was afraid of you," Rossignol added good-naturedly. "Have a smoke?"

He offered the prisoner a black cigar, and Heldon took it with gruff thanks. Rossignol was not such a bad fellow; he was half willing to talk.

"What am I here for?" he asked.

The little detective laughed.

"What do you think? Probably for the last thing you've done. But you're going up before the examining magistrate now. Pull yourself together. I'd like to see you hold your own."

Heldon smoked in silence; he began to like this frank little man who could hit hard and talk soft, and the cigar helped; but the one thing he wanted to know—he dared not ask. Had Viola been taken? He held his tongue. Nothing was ever lost by saying too little. It was talking that played the devil in life.

"You're not going to make a row, are you?" Rossignol asked.

"I'm not a fool. What would be the use?"

"Good — no handcuffs, then — come quietly with me."

Heldon laid down the stump of his cigar in a corner of his cell; then he stood up and followed the detective. In the corridor Rossignol gripped his elbow and they went side by side.

THERE were two windows in the magistrate's room and the sunlight poured in. The examining magistrate, Mr. Meunier, was sitting at a large table covered with papers. He was a metallic-looking man of forty, angular and hard, with iron-gray hair and iron-gray eyes. They were alone —for Rossignol had turned back at the door —save for the secretary, who sat at a small table near the window, his note-book before him.

"Your name is James Edgar Heldon," the magistrate said, consulting a paper on his table, "thirty years of age, English."

He read aloud the police report which exists in the files of the *Sûreté* regarding every foreigner living in Paris. It told of Heldon's arrival in France, of his work in the racing-stables at Maison-Lafitte, of his marriage with Viola, who was bluntly described as the mistress of the Comte de Granlieu—and Heldon winced, but did not lose his self-control, for Rossignol had given him good advice. And the report went on to describe his "loss of employment."

"I left of my own accord," he interrupted.

Again Mr. Meunier stared at him with metallic eyes; then, without deigning a reply, he went on reading the report. It described how Heldon had got in with a lot of crooked racing men; how he was working with an illicit book-maker, and it added that he was an associate of gamblers, crooks and criminals.

With an air of disgust the magistrate threw down the paper from which he had been reading. He glanced over at his secretary, as though he were saying, "Well, you see what he is!" The secretary nodded comprehension; in addition to taking shorthand notes, it was his business to be a sycophant.

There was a knock at the door and, with a word of apology, a dapper little man, daintily dressed, wearing eye-glasses, holding in his hand a round black hat and a cane, entered the room. The examining magistrate rose and welcomed him, but did not speak Mr. Guelpa's name. He gave him a seat at the table and pushed toward him the police report he had just read aloud. There was silence while the little man read it. Heldon hardly moved; he stood erect, and his face showed no emotion.

"Of course you have an alibi," the magistrate said at last; "every crook has."

Heldon stiffened at the insult, but he had determined not to lose his temper.

"Why am I here?" he asked.

"Oh, that's the tone you take, is it?"

"Perhaps it would be better to let him sit down," Mr. Guelpa whispered.

HE HAD been studying the big man and saw that it was only by an effort he held himself erect; it would be hard to get anything out of him if his whole mind were centered on fighting his bodily fatigue. The magistrate assented to Mr. Guelpa's suggestion, and Heldon, with a sense of relief, sat down on a big wooden chair in front of the table.

"Where were you the night the Comte de Granlieu was killed?"

Heldon hesitated, but he knew he must answer.

"I don't know," he replied slowly. "When was it?"

"You won't answer, eh?" the magistrate shouted. "Then I'll tell you. At half-past nine you were in the apartment of the Comte de Granlieu in the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas."

Mr. Guelpa leaned over and whispered something.

"You stood near the door. You stood there for some time. That is true?"

All this was so unexpected that Heldon could only stare; there had been no one with him in the room when these things happened save the count himself.

"It is true?" Heldon would not speak. "Your motor-car waited outside?"

"I have no motor-car," Heldon said cautiously. This denial seemed safe.

"No? Whose car was it? You were driving off in it when you were arrested. A stolen car, eh?"

"It wasn't mine," Heldon repeated doggedly; "but I had a right to drive it."

"Who owns it?"

"It is Mr. Jandel's car."

The examining magistrate looked down at the police report which recorded Heldon's life in Paris.

"He is your employer?"

"Yes."

"Now, the night the count was killed, who was in that car?"

Heldon did not answer; there was an obstinate look on his reckless face. At last he said,

"I want a lawyer."

"But why?" Mr. Meunier asked pleasantly, "Come—come! You are not yet charged with any crime."

"Then, why am I here?"

"To give us some information and clear yourself—mark you—of the suspicion of being concerned in a case of murder."

"Let me suggest," Mr. Guelpa remarked softly, "that you should let him see just where he stands. He is not foolish—no, no! Once he sees how circumstances seem to implicate him, he will be only too ready to clear up the whole affair."

Heldon looked from one man to the other; it was the soft-spoken man he feared most.

"Very well," Mr. Meunier said sharply. "That night, you drove the car to the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas. You entered the count's apartment. You remained there with him for some time. Then you went out to your car. Immediately afterward, a woman entered the flat. She came out with the count. That woman was the Comtesse de Granlieu. They got into your car together, and you drove away. Where? To the Pool of Auteuil?"

At last Heldon spoke; he moistened his dry lips and shouted roughly,

"That's a lie!"

The examining magistrate started up angrily; he was not spoken to in that way in this tragic office of his which was, often, but a few steps from the guillotine; but Mr. Guelpa softly intervened.

"Where did you drive?" he asked.

"To the Avenue Henri Martin."

"To the residence of the countess?"

"I don't know. I don't know any Comtesse de Granlieu. I never saw her."

"Did the count go into the house?" the soft voice asked.

Heldon determined to take refuge in silence.

"I'll not speak until I get a lawyer," he said. "I don't know what you're aiming at—and I won't talk—alone in here—with that fellow"—he indicated the secretary—"writing down whatever you please. I'm done." He gave this ultimatum through his set teeth.

IN THE face of this obstinacy, neither the examining magistrate nor Mr. Guelpa asked any further questions. Indeed, they waited until Heldon had been taken back to his cell before they spoke to each other. Then Mr. Guelpa said:

"It's clearing up. Of course he drove the car. And he was in the count's flat that night—he is still wearing the big rubber-heeled shoes that made those marks on the floor. What took him there? He was no friend to the Comte de Granlieu. The woman who is now his wife had been the count's mistress, and he is not the kind of man who would have gone willingly to see the count—without a good reason. Did Dominique, the count's valet, get him to come? Or did some one else send him?"

"Some one else being the Comtesse de Granlieu?" suggested Mr. Meunier.

"Ah—that opens up a field of conjecture!"

"Look at the facts. The man and woman arrive together in the car——"

"But is that a fact?"

"A supposition, if you prefer. Heldon goes into the flat first. He is admitted to the *salon*—by whom? Probably by Dominique, for in spite of his denial, he is subject to suspicion. Heldon stands by the door. What does he say? Evidently he is asking the count to go out to the car. Why? What reason does he give? That the countess—or perhaps he merely says a woman —wants to see him. Is the count suspicious? At all events, he refuses to go. Then what happens? Heldon goes back to the automobile. Dominique, who may be lying, says the count went to the door. Perhaps he did; he wanted to see who the woman was—to see if Heldon had told the truth. The woman came. It was the countess. The count himself admitted her and led her into the *salon*. What was said? What was the temptation? I do not know; but she persuaded him to accompany her—in the motor-car driven by Heldon—on his last tragic ride to death."

"An interesting supposition."

"Who was in that car? The man who was to die—his wife—and Heldon, who had cause enough to hate the Comte de Granlieu. She must have known that when she picked him as a confederate."

"You seem to have reached a rather definite conclusion."

"I am only stating the case. There are other facts. Heldon was notoriously poor before the murder. He was in debt to his landlord—in debt to the wine-shops—though, for a man in his class of life, he lived lavishly enough. Now, when he was arrested, he had four thousnd francs in his pocket. And I know where it came from."

"Yes?" Mr. Guelpa said interrogatively. "You have the diamond?"

"Both the diamond and the man she sold it to—'she' being Heldon's wife. She managed to get away and pass the money to Heldon just before he was taken. And that, Mr. Guelpa, is the case as far as we've got. You have proved that the motor-car which Heldon drove that night is the one in which the count, living or dead, was taken to the Pool of Auteuil—and we have the car with the scarred tire and your plaster cast of the mark it made near the pool. There is just one thing more before I take action."

"And that?"

"It is a little piece of evidence I expect you will be able to furnish me before long."

"Possibly."

"That diamond was sold by Heldon's wife to the old 'fence' in the Rue de Provence and the money was given to Heldon. But where did she get the diamond?"

"From Heldon."

"And Heldon? Where did he get it? From the Comtesse de Granlieu. It was the price she paid for her husband's death."

"I see," said Mr. Guelpa; "I see. Then, if the diamond was hers?"

"I don't need anything more," the examining magistrate answered.

"Nothing more?"

"No. If I can trace it to her possession—that is enough.

"Well, why not?" Mr. Guelpa asked. He rose and took up his hat and stick and moved toward the door. "You have only to show it to the Marquis de Granlieu."

The magistrate finds that the solution of the mystery of the count's death is not as simple as he imagines. See the next instalment in December EVERYBODY'S—out November 15th.

Ecclesiastical Stuff

A Story of the Stage, Unlike Any You Have Ever Read. It's About Two Vaudeville Singers, a Stolen Song, the Author of It and a Parson

By Walter De Leon

Author of "Everything Save Honor," etc.

BILLY RENTON and I were sitting in his old flivver, waiting for Freda, his wife, to finish her Saturday-afternoon shopping in New Brunswick before returning to their farm, when a Salvation Army lassie approached us and smilingly proffered a copy of the *War Cry*. Billy dug a quarter from his pocket and gave it to the girl.

Then, rather to my surprise, he took the magazine.

"Getting religious in your old age?" I asked.

"Old age! Why, dog-gone it, I was still trying to straighten the wave in my chestnut locks after every one of your hairs was gray."

"And mine *stayed* gray," I returned.

Billy grinned as he rubbed his bald head.

"I shouldn't have left you that opening. But I'm not getting hopelessly religious even though Freda does bring home her preacher and his wife for dinner every Sunday."

"Then why the *War Cry?*"

"Ever hear of Grace Gordon? Used to be the Gordon Sisters, small-time song-and-dance team."

The name was unfamiliar. Before I could tell Billy so, Freda crossed the sidewalk, her arms heaped high with parcels.

"When do you figure to begin shopping?" Billy teased.

"When you give me some money. Mine's all spent. Home, James, and go easy over the bumps. I got dollar eggs in my lap."

Out of town, on the highway, I turned to Billy.

"Who was Grace Gordon?"

"I'll tell you about her."

Of a Saturday night, in the days when bartenders were more numerous than bank-tellers, Bud Smith, unsuccessful young song-writer, stood at one end of Casey's saloon watching Casey cash his customers' pay-checks. Casey's place was on Ninth Avenue between two of the boarding-housed Forties, and consequently his clientele was both homo- and heterogeneous. Bud watched them all enter, liquidate, laugh, loiter, linger and leave. Then,

"Listen, Casey," he said thickly; "I'm a little short this week. Gruenstein's going to buy a song of mine, but I don't get the check till Monday. I'm good for a couple of drinks till then, ain't I?"

Casey had trusted Bud before, and the song-writer had invariably proved worthy of the trust. So it was Bud's condition rather than the boss's flintiness of heart which prompted him to say sternly,

"Two; no more."

"Much 'bliged," Bud murmured. He glanced at the clock. In another fifteen minutes it would be safe to go to his room in Mrs. Cohen's boarding-house. Dinner would be finished—a dinner Bud had passed up by reason of a three weeks' board-bill unpaid. Mrs. Cohen was lovely to her boarders—when they had it.

"It's my own fault I'm broke," Bud told himself, pouring his second drink, "because I've artistic and creative inclinations—without enough technic or genius to put them on a paying basis. I'm through. I'm going to quit writing songs and do something else. But what?"

Jimmy Conover, a comedian who hadn't been funny for six years without one foot on a brass rail, drifted in and tried to touch Casey for a ten-spot.

"He made good money selling shirts before his artistic inclinations threw him for a loss," thought Bud, watching Conover pocket the five-dollar bill Casey gave him.

"You know when I'll get that five back, don't you?" Casey grumbled good-naturedly.

"In the beautiful by and by," chirped the head bartender.

Nobody can figure the brain of a song-writer.

"The beautiful by and by," Bud repeated. "Great title for a song." He saw Casey's back was turned, and swiftly helped himself to another drink. "Beautiful by and by. Have to change it—too much like 'sweet by and by.' But great idea! Human. World's all wrong—mixed up. Right man in wrong place—that sort of stuff. But cheer up. Everything'll be all right in beautiful by— No; lemme see now. *When* will everything be all right? After we die. Die—by and by—fly—sky. Sure! Up in the sky. Can't make it too religious—wouldn't be popular. Mythical—must be some mythical place; for instance, an island. That's it—island. Island of By and By. Good! Hate to lose 'beautiful.' Nice word—beautiful word! Now, how can I—I'm a sap-head. It's made to order. 'The Beautiful Island of By and By.' I'll go home and write it."

WHEN the Gordon Sisters, who had managed to land a job with a cheap burlesque show, entered their room that night after a late rehearsal, they heard across the narrow back yards between their back bedroom and the back bedrooms of Mrs. Cohen's house the strains of a melody sung to the accompaniment of a banjo.

In that beautiful island of By and By,
In that beautiful island in the sky,
No trouble or grief or pain is there;
Every one's happy and on the square.

"Nifty tune, ain't it?" wearily commented Grace Gordon, who had started life some twenty years before as Pearl Brown.

"Uh-huh," yawned Constance, erstwhile Esther Applebaum.

"We could harmonize that great."

"Uh-huh."

Every one's got a smile on his face,
Every one's got his very own place
In that beautiful, wonderful,
Oh, but it's wonderful,
Beautiful island of By and By.

Grace walked to the open window.

"What a riot that song would be for us in the second act!" she said.

The singing stopped. Glancing across the yards, Grace saw a man put down his banjo and scribble some words on paper.

"Song-writer," she diagnosed, "doping out a new number."

By the time Bud Smith picked up his banjo again, Grace had Constance at the window.

"Get the tune. I'll get the words," she whispered.

"What's the idea?"

"New song. We need it."

For an hour they sat at the window listening and memorizing, while Bud polished his melody and fitted in his simple lyrics.

Monday morning, Bud was waiting when Sid Gruenstein entered his office.

"Listen, Sid; I've got a new number, a knock-out. You've been square, and I'm going to give you first crack at it."

"What's the title?"

" 'Beautiful Island of By and By.' "

"Let's hear it."

At that moment, on a train pulling out of the Grand Central Station, Grace Gordon went to the stage-manager of the "Gay Paraders" company.

"Listen, Mr. Schwartz; we got a new number, a knock-out. You been good to us, so we're going to give you first crack at it."

"What's the title?"

" 'Beautiful Island of By and By'."

"Let's hear it."

Some months later, the Gordon Sisters sat in the dingy lobby of a small-town hotel in New Mexico. The rest of the "Gay Paraders" were parading ungaily as best they could in the general direction of Broadway. For three days Grace and Constance had held down the same chairs, waiting for an answer to the telegram Grace had sent to a friend in a moment of optimism.

Into the lobby walked a tall, spare, elderly gentleman in black frock coat, starched collar, white string tie and wide-brimmed black Stetson.

"Gambler or sky-pilot? Bet you a quarter either way," Grace offered.

"I ain't got a quarter."

"Neither have I. But that don't keep me from betting."

THE tall, elderly gentleman's glance fell on the two girls and rested there. Traces of make-up showed on their cheeks. Their clothing was flashy, cheap, inclining to shabbiness. He noticed one of them was returning his look coolly.

"I beg your pardon, young ladies. I am the Reverend L. B. Smith."

"Well, what about it?" asked Grace.

"Am I mistaken in connecting you with the theatrical company recently—er——"

"Recently deceased," Grace nodded. "We're the Gordon Sisters. Notice our shoes? Thin soles—see? That's why we ain't walking with the rest of the troupe."

"Very sad indeed!"

"You ain't said half of it, Doctor."

"I enjoyed the performance—portions of it."

"You seen the show? You—a minister?"

"There is nothing in my religion which forbids me to attend the theatre."

"What is your religion?"

As she did all men, Grace had been sizing up the minister as they talked. There was a strong appeal in the old gentleman's personality which she was quick to appreciate.

"I am an evangelist, at present associated with no established creed or doctrine. The Lord in His wisdom has seen fit to visit me with hardship and travail——"

"You got nothing on us when it comes to hardship and travel," Grace interrupted.

"As I listened to you young ladies sing the other evening, an idea came to me. I wonder if it would be attractive to you."

"Any money in it?" Grace asked eagerly.

"Before answering you, let me tell you my idea. You sang a song—'The Beautiful Island of By and By.' The words were cheap, badly chosen, I thought. But the spirit, the message they tried to convey verged on the religious. As I listened the other evening, the song seemed to me an ideal instrument for reaching the heart of those who are frightened or driven away from the established churches either by their rigid ritualism or their excessive emotionalism."

"Whatever that means," Grace added. "Would you mind cutting down to the point, Doctor?"

"Do you know many church hymns?"

"Not any. But we're quick studies."

"I have, and play passably upon, a melodeon, a small organ. I might help you to learn a few hymns. Would you consider casting your lot with mine in a series of evangelical meetings? It is good work—it is work of which you may not be ashamed, because it is the Lord's work."

"That don't mean a thing to Constance. She's Jewish. Me—I ain't been in a church since I was baptized. But that part's all right if there's any sugar in sight. What's the salary figure?"

"Ah!" The Reverend Smith thought a moment. "The rewards would be commensurate with our efforts and the generosity of the congregation, under heaven's guidance. After the sermon, after the hymns, before the benediction, you ladies would pass among the congregation, reaping the harvest as you sang."

Grace considered that from every angle.

"If they liked the show, they'd contribute. If it's a flop, we don't eat. On the other hand, we ain't eating now." She lapsed into speculative silence. "It wouldn't cost us nothing for wardrobe. We got some gray dresses we used in a Quaker number. We could let down the hems a couple of inches." Again thoughtful silence. "In this country we'd be playing mostly to men, wouldn't we?" The doctor nodded. "Listen, Doctor; I don't know nothing about you—what your stuff is like. But I'm willing to find out. If you've got anywhere near the class in your line I and Constance has in ours, we'll give 'em a show they'll like. How do we split?"

"After expenses were deducted, we might divide the remainder half and half."

"We *might*, but we won't. After expenses come out, what's the matter with splitting three ways?"

Reverend Smith smiled.

"Very well."

Grace held out her hand.

"We don't need no contract, I guess. Just shake on it."

The doctor shook hands.

"Will you meet me this afternoon at the opera-house to begin the memorizing of some hymns?"

"Sure thing!"

The Gordon Sisters silently watched the old gentleman go through the door.

"Wish I'd 'a' bet you a quarter he was a preacher," sighed Constance.

"You'd 'a' lost, kid," Grace replied. "That guy is a gambler."

A FEW nights later, in another village, after their first service, the Gordon Sisters and Reverend Smith sat counting the pile of bills and small change they had collected while singing "Bringing in the Sheaves."

"Listen, Doc." Grace, with the instinct of the showman, had an idea for improvements. "That 'Bringing in the Sheaves' song is all wet for a come-on number. It keeps the audience's mind on what we're doing to them. After you giving them hell for an hour and a half, we've got to make 'em feel good before they'll loosen up properly."

"Didn't you approve of my sermon?"

Grace grinned.

"I'll hand it to you, Doc. I didn't think it was in you. When I seen them big roughnecks wiping their eyes and coughing and shuffling after you got warmed up and doing your stuff good, I says to Constance, I says: 'This show is a hit. It's in.' "

"What would you suggest instead of 'Bringing in the Sheaves'?"

"Only one song—'Beautiful Island of By and By.' You saw how it went over to-night. After smelling sulphur all evening, you can't expect 'em to dig deep without you give 'em a little encouragement. 'No trouble or grief or pain is there.' See the point? 'Every one's got his very own place.' Get it?"

"Perhaps you are right," the doctor said.

Experience proved it. The girls, working as hard and conscientiously as ever they did behind footlights, found their slow pilgrimages up and down the aisles between blocks of heavy-handed miners, light-hearted cow-punchers, red-faced oil-drillers and pale-featured gamblers a source of sure revenue.

When they had been together for a fortnight—time enough to prove that the combination was effective—there came a tap on the door of the girls' room one afternoon in the rowdy oil-camp where they had set up their revival tent. Constance was sleeping. Grace, discontinuing the writing of a choice assortment of opinions she was expressing to the friend who had failed to answer her telegram, walked to the door and opened it an inch. She saw the evangelist.

"Come in, Doctor," she invited. "What can I do for you?" She noticed his unusual pallor, the nervous twitching of his hands. She felt, rather than saw, that he was suffering. "You ain't sick, are you, Doc?"

"No, my dear; just a trifle—er, shaky. I don't want to intrude myself, but it occurred to me you might not object to chatting for an hour. Or perhaps a long walk in the country?"

Grace grinned wisely.

"Old Reaction got you, too, Doc? If I was a drinker, I'd be lit for fair by night. Doc, I ain't much on walking when I don't have to. You got your pipe with you? Well, what do you say we just sit here where it's fairly cool and put a few of our friends on the pan?"

The preacher smiled.

"Thank you. You must know some interesting people."

Grace told him about a few of them. She talked till the dinner-bell rang. Time after time she knew she lost his interest. Time after time she saw him jerk his attention again to her. Which didn't bother Grace at all. After two unsuccessful seasons, she had a lot on her chest she was glad to get off, and she didn't care who heard her.

Flares of rude torches flickered over the roughly dressed men who gathered irreligiously that night to witness the show furnished by the Reverend Smith, assisted by the Sisters Gordon. The first hymn was received with riotous applause. The Bible-reading passed unheeded. All eyes were focused on Grace and Constance, demure in Quaker gray, seated on the platform, apparently oblivious of the hoarse comment they were exciting.

"The gallery at Miner's Bowery Burlesque never had anything on this gang of gorillas," Grace muttered, as she and Constance rose to sing the second hymn. "The doc'll have to work fast to hold 'em."

Of the half dozen sermons Reverend Smith used, she couldn't think of one which would interest that particular congregation. Apprehensively she watched the minister walk to the edge of the platform to announce his text. It was a new one, one she had not heard.

Calmly, authoritatively, the reverend's voice filled the tent.

"I take my text to-night from the old Testament; from Ecclesiastes, the preacher, the son of David. 'All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.'"

In simple phrase he explained the thought of infinite power, domain and love with homely parable and illustrations from every-day life.

An hour, fifteen minutes more, an hour and a half, steadily he talked, giving a message of everlasting humbleness and ever-present hope. As he finished, a raw-boned six-footer in the front row jumped to his feet.

"You're dam' tootin', Doc. There's still a lot of things I don't understand, and there's a couple of onery cusses I know ain't never on this here earth goin' to convince me they've *got* souls. But when you tell me, man to man, that I've only got two measly little laws—love and the Commandments—to abide by and everything will be O. K., you've got me thinkin', Doc."

"Quick, Doc!" whispered Grace, her lip trembling but her showman brain functioning. "Give 'em 'Beautiful Island of By and By'—while they're thinking."

Down into the audience they went, singing with full throats.

"Listen, sister!" A beefy young man with a shock of red hair, his broad face spotted with freckles, timidly touched Constance's hand as he dropped a twenty-dollar bill into the collection-box. "The doc read something from the Bible about 'thy head shall be annointed with oil'. Is that a tip?" His brown eyes anxiously looked into hers. "Tell me—steer me; shall I sink the bank-roll in the new drilling out yonder? Shall I?"

"Uh-huh," Constance replied.

"Thanks, sister."

When the crowd had filed out of the tent that night, Grace said,

"Why ain't you never pulled that rivers-and-sea sermon before? It's a knock-out—what I call a human sermon."

There was a peculiar glint in the old gentleman's eye when he said, softly,

"It is my favorite; *my* sermon."

"It builds right up to 'Beautiful Island' like the same man had wrote 'em both."

"The writer of the song, I think, must also have suffered the experience of striving and not attaining—and still hoping."

"Well, anyway," Grace replied slowly, trying to forget she had stolen the song as she joined the others in counting the contribution, "we got to admit it sure is one money-getting melody."

SIX months later, Grace glanced approvingly at an announcement in the window of Mulvaney's Palace of Joys, in M——, Oklahoma.

CHURCH TO-NIGHT
IN THE DANCE-HALL
REV. L. B. SMITH
Assisted by the
SISTERS GORDON

Inside the top of her silk stocking, comfortingly uncomfortable against the hollow of her knee, was a packet of ten- and twenty-dollar bills gathered in the mining camps and oil fields of the Southwest. The harvest had been bountiful. They had reaped plenteously. She and Constance had guarded their share of the golden crop.

But Grace was worried over the Reverend Smith. His life contained a mystery. "He's class," she argued; "yet he's out here in the bushes when by rights he belongs in the big burgs. Why?"

She had come to the conclusion that the preacher had a weakness. She reasoned that it was his struggle to conquer his weakness which drove him every now and then to her room with a request that he might read or talk with her, that brought him into the pulpit on more than a few nights with the mud and dust of country roads and open fields thick on his shoes.

Grace had concluded that he purposely kept himself without money. The widows and orphans, the sick and needy, the maimed and crippled divided the evangelist's third of the profits. When, once, she remonstrated with him, he smiled and said, "I'm far better off without it."

Slowly Grace climbed the stairs to the room she shared with Constance above the Palace of Joys.

"Lookit!" Constance greeted her, giving Grace a telegram she'd been reading.

> Not yet; but everything looks hopeful. Still backing your tip with all I can borrow.
> FRECKLES REID.

"He hasn't missed sending you a wire once a week since you saw him, has he?"

Grace smiled. "What are you doing? Sending him our route?"

"Not me," Constance replied. "Gee! If he goes broke, he's just liable to come after me with a gun."

"Well, you *told* him to play his roll on oil, didn't you?"

"How did *I* know what he was talking about?" queried Constance irritably.

AT SEVEN o'clock that night, the doors of the dance-hall in the Palace of Joys were thrown open. Slowly the room filled. Grace looked about for the Reverend Smith. He usually played more or less sacred music while the audience congregated. When, at a quarter past the hour, she still saw no trace of him, she put Constance at the organ with instructions to fake a few tunes.

By seven-thirty every chair in the hall was occupied. Still no preacher.

The men began scuffling impatiently.

"Come on; let's go," advised a voice from the center of the hall.

"You can play 'Onward, Christian Soldiers,' can't you?" Grace whispered to Constance. "Let's give it to them before they start walking out on us."

They sang every verse. Then another hymn, and another. As they finished the extent of Constance's repertoire, in walked the Reverend Smith, white of face, dust from heel to knee, his collar sweated limp. Physically almost at the point of exhaustion, he mounted the platform.

"I take my text tonight," his voice was hardly stronger than a whisper, "from Ecclesiastes, the preacher, the son of David. 'All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.' "

"What a game guy he is!" lipped Grace. "All in—and giving them his toughest sermon."

Gaining vigor as he warmed to his theme, gradually the tax he had put on his strength began to tell on the old gentleman. Grace wondered if he would be able to finish. As he drove himself on, it hit Grace with the suddenness of a blow that he had forgotten his audience, that he was talking—to himself.

" 'And there shall be no night there—
There shall be no more—curse.' "

The Reverend Smith swayed; his knees bent. Before Grace could reach him, he fell, and, falling, his head struck a corner of the table. An ugly cut was red-staining his silver hair when Grace tenderly raised his unconscious head on her lap.

An old desert rat, bent and grizzle-haired, was the first man to reach her, a flask of whisky in his hand.

"Give him a little of this, sister." He poured some down the minister's throat.

"Ain't there a doctor in the house?" Grace asked. She turned to Constance. "Chase up to our room and bring me your peroxide."

The desert rat poured a bit more of the liquor into Smith's mouth. Mulvaney's red face showed through the crowd.

"Anything I can do, sister?"

"Yes. Take a soft white petticoat off of one of them flussies out there, if they wear 'em. Otherwise, bring me a towel."

Constance elbowed through the men surrounding Grace with the peroxide bottle.

"Gimme a clean handkerchief, somebody."

As Grace finished binding the wound, the old desert-rat administered another drink from the flask. The preacher coughed, stirred and opened his eyes.

"Take it easy, Doc," boomed Mulvaney heartily. "You're all right. Ain't one of us here wouldn't change places with you."

"I'll tell the world!" croaked the moth-eaten desert-rat.

"Why didn't you say you was sick?" Grace softly scolded. "Holy Smoke! You scared the heart out of me."

"Here's something to bring it back again," volunteered an oil-driller, proffering his flask.

"I don't need it, mister; but another little shot wouldn't do the doc any harm." She placed the flask to Smith's lips.

"No!" He struggled feebly.

Came a chorus of encouragement from the crowd. Grace whispered:

"Just a swallow, Doc. It'll make you sleep better."

"No!"

"All right. Hey, you, mister! Help me up-stairs with him."

A dozen hands volunteered.

"I can walk, boys," the doc protested. But when they humored him, his knees gave way under him.

"Now will you take it easy?" Grace patted him tenderly. "Pick him up, boys."

Mulvaney, the desert-rat and a quiet chap they called "Arizona" put him to bed under Grace's guidance.

"Take a good long sleep for yourself, Doc. If you need me, tap on the wall. I'm in the next room." She turned the light low and walked from the room.

A moment later the desert-rat creaked up the stairs from the bar. He loosened the cork in a flask and put it, with water, on the stand at the minister's bedside.

"When that cut begins aching, Doc, here's a little soothing sirup for you." Then he tiptoed away.

IN THE next room, Grace suddenly sat straight up in bed.

"What a couple of cheeses *we've* been," she said, bitterly. "Why the heck haven't we ever asked the doc what was on his mind. Maybe we could have helped the old boy. It ain't too late, now. Let's do it the first thing in the morning!"

Her mind eased somewhat, she dropped off to sleep.

And no one woke her when, a few minutes after midnight, the Reverend Smith walked into the gambling-room of Mulvaney's Palace of Joys.

"What's the trouble, Doc?" asked Mulvaney.

"Nothing. I couldn't sleep. Bring me a drink, please." His voice was low, hard, a trifle thick.

Mulvaney looked at him closely.

"Drunk," he mumbled, "Cold drunk." Persuasively he took the doctor's arm. "Maybe a cup of coffee and a steak——"

"Whisky, please. I have money."

Mulvaney shrugged his shoulders and called a waiter.

Smith watched the play at the faro-table, every now and again ordering another drink. At length, at the turn of a card, he nodded. A shadow of a smile twisted his straight lips.

"Running pretty to-night, aren't they?" he said. "Mr. Dealer, give me a stack of fives, please." His hand went into his pocket and came forth with a solitary dollar.

From the crowd round the craps-table on the other side of the room came a strident voice:

"Don't slide 'em; *roll* 'em!"

Then another voice cried:

"Gimme them dice. Who's going to fade me?"

The Reverend Smith's voice carried sharply across the room:

"A dollar he's right."

"I'll take that, Doc." Some one laughed. Smith turned to the faro dealer.

"I'll be back in a few minutes. Have a stack ready for me."

The first time the preacher got the dice, he placed two dollars—all he had—on the board. It was covered, with a laugh.

"Sorry to ask you gentlemen to play for such a small stake, but——"

The dice spun from his fingers. They read a natural—a five and a deuce.

"That makes four dollars to shoot for, gentlemen. Still chicken-feed, but——"

A six-five natural showed when the cubes came to rest.

"Eight dollars is just half of what I intend shooting for after I throw this."

"Natural!" shouted one of the men watching the play. The doc was the coolest man round the board.

"Becoming interesting—isn't it, gentlemen? Shoot it all, of course."

Again he won—with a seven.

"Five straight passes," whispered an oil-field worker. "He can't do it again." A bill fluttered onto the table. "Ten to five he don't."

"Take him, friends," calmly advised the doc. "I'm right to-night."

A six-five throw proved it.

The doc took twenty dollars from the sixty-four that had become his.

"Dragging down?" taunted the oil-field worker.

"No. I'm laying twenty to a hundred I throw my seventh straight natural."

Five twenties were slapped atop the doc's.

"Shoot!"

The preacher spun the dice deftly with a back-hand motion. Seven!

Cupping his hands over the cubes, but without touching them, he turned to the heaviest loser.

"I'm going to give them to you, brother, while they're still hot."

He picked up his money and crossed to the faro-table.

"I'll buy a hundred and eighty dollars, Mr, Dealer."

Within ten minutes the entire room was

watching the preacher buck the bank, some of them stringing along with him, others coppering his bets, waiting for him to lose. But gradually the checks in front of him increased.

Mulvaney, standing behind the dealer's chair, scrutinized the old man intently, critically.

"Born gambler," he told the waiter who kept refilling the doc's glass. "He knows every angle of the play. Look at him! See how he's alternating his bets—one big one, one small one. The way he's playing to-night, he'll break the bank before he gets through—and he knows it. Unless something happens."

Something did happen. A man entered with the printed overnight entries for the races at New Orleans the following afternoon. He put the sheet on a bulletin-board directly in the doc's line of vision.

When next he raised his glass, Smith saw it.

Once his mind had ceased momentarily from concentrating on his play, he appeared to become conscious for the first time of the crowd round him. The throbbing pain of his wound, suddenly poignant, caused him to raise both hands to his head. He sagged forward as though utterly tired, burned out.

"Want to lay your stack double or quits on the next card?" asked the weary dealer.

The doc's hand fell from his eyes. Again he saw the overnight entry list. He saw one name of them all with clear vision. It was "By and By."

"By and By," said the doc softly. "What are the odds?"

"Three to one against," Mulvaney replied.

"Take my bet?"

"For how much?"

The doc pointed to his chips.

"My stack—seventeen hundred."

Quickly Mulvaney decided.

"Billy," he called, "write a ticket for Dr. Smith for seventeen hundred on By and By in the fourth at New Orleans to-morrow at three to one."

"Yes, sir."

"Everybody have a drink on the house," Mulvaney invited. He felt, whatever might happen, that the doc's switch had saved him money. But when, in the bar, he looked for the preacher, he could not find him. "Gone to bed, I guess."

When Grace did not find the minister in his bed the next forenoon, when she did find an empty flask, she hurried directly to Mulvaney.

"What happened last night?" she demanded. "Come clean."

Mulvaney did.

"His weakness." Grace's white teeth gritted. "And instead of helping him, I go to sleep."

They looked everywhere for the doctor—everywhere but the telegraph office at the railroad junction six miles to the east, where the racing results were relayed to Mulvaney's.

THE Palace of Joys was filled when the results began coming in. Men who had coppered all the preacher's bets the night before were laying all they had left that he'd win with By and By.

The first race interested no one. Nor did the second and third.

"Fourth race—for three-year olds," chanted Billy, his ear to a telephone-receiver, "mile and a quarter. Trey of Hearts breaks in front—Annabel catches him at the quarter—at the half Briscoe challenges — Briscoe, Annabel, Trey of Hearts neck and neck at the three-quarter pole—Wine-Cup closes—By and By, coming up from nowhere, at his heels—Briscoe drops back—finish! By and By wins, Trey of Hearts second, Wine-Cup a poor third."

A yell went up from the men in the bar. Billy raised his hand for silence.

"Mulvaney!" he called.

The big proprietor's face sobered as he took the message that came over the wire. He hung up and spoke quietly.

"Charley, you and Arizona take my car and drive over to the junction for the parson. Peters says he collapsed when By and By won."

Grace was the first one out of the machine at the junction. The old gentleman lay on a cot, his eyes closed. Grace's ear heard but the faintest of heart-beats.

"For God's sake, ain't there a doctor nowhere?" she whispered.

At the word, the doc's eyelids fluttered and slowly opened. He saw her tense, drawn little face close to his. A smile flitted across his lips. Weakly, uncertainly, his hand fumbled at a vest pocket.

"What is it, Doc?"

Everybody's Magazine, November, 1922

"In my pocket—ticket—yours."

Grace removed the race-ticket that called for sixty-eight hundred dollars.

"You've been—good girl. I—want—you—keep it. The—long fight—is—over." His eyes closed. The smile faded from his tired face. His lips moved. Grace bent to listen. " 'Unto the place—the rivers come—they return—again'."

"Doc," pleaded Grace, brushing away the tears she could not check; "no, Doc! You mustn't quit. Listen; I'll help——"

Arizona laid his hand gently on her shoulder.

"Come on, sister," he urged huskily. "The doc's race is done run."

Mulvaney entered the girls' room a week later.

"I suppose you ladies will be hitting the trail east pretty soon. There's nothing for you out here. Let me know what I can do for you. I—I'm closing out my place next month."

"Why?"

"Well, for one thing, this camp is growing too fast to stay uncivilized and care-free much longer. And—and Charlie and Arizona and, well, most of my pals have gone to France to fight."

"But we ain't in the war," Grace objected.

"There *is* a war. That's enough for Charlie and Arizona. I wish they'd waited. We're heading into it as fast as greased lightning ourselves and"—he paused—"anyhow, I've got sixty-eight hundred dollars I'd like for you to take off my hands. You'd better take it east—as far as Kansas City, anyway."

"I'm going to take it a lot further than that," Grace announced quietly. "It's going to New York. Mister, you've heard I and Constance sing 'Beautiful Island of By and By'?"

"Yes."

"Well, we stole that song. I mean it; we *stole* it. It's paid our bills and bought us clothes and given us our daily bread. It's given help and comfort to a lot of widows and orphans besides letting me and Constance put something away for a rainy day. And we stole it from a poor bum.

"If we hadn't 'a' had that song in our repertoire, old Doc Smith and us wouldn't never have got into this camp. If doc hadn't loved it, he never would have bet on that By and By horse. Any way you look at it, that sixty-eight hundred is By and By money. It belongs to the man who wrote the song, *and I'm going to see he gets it!*"

Mulvaney regarded her with softened eyes.

"You're a thoroughbred, sister."

SO GRACE went East, to Mrs. Cohen's boarding house, where she learned that the song-writer's name was Smith, and that he had departed, unmourned, many moons ago. Mrs. Cohen recalled that on one occasion Mr. Smith had given her a check signed by Sid Gruenstein, a music publisher. Perhaps he could give her further information.

The zigzag trail Grace followed led her late that summer to Plattsburg, down between rows of brown tents, to a group of soldiers gathered round the opening of a slightly larger tent.

"Pipe the chicken!" piped one of the boys.

From the tent came a tall, well-built, tanned young man with straight lips and deep lines running from nostrils to jawbone. The insignia of army chaplain gleamed on the collar of his blouse.

"For whom are you looking?" He smiled boyishly.

"For Mr. B. M. Smith—Bud Smith."

"I am Bud Smith; by the grace of God and army regulations, Chaplain Smith."

Grace glanced at the crowd of grinning soldiers.

"Can—can I see you alone some time?"

Chaplain Bud turned to the group.

"Chase yourselves, fellows. Jimmy, bring a couple of stools for us, please."

On the shaded side of the tent, while the afternoon sun sank low, Grace talked. She told her story from the beginning; she described the Reverend Smith as he had walked into the dingy lobby of the New Mexico hotel. She portrayed the power of his pleading and the appeal of his favorite sermon. As she talked, Chaplain Bud grew grave and silently absorbed. And, finally, when, herself deeply affected, she told of the old gentleman's last minutes, she saw that Chaplain Bud was weeping.

"Oh, gee, I'm sorry! I didn't mean——"

The chaplain took her hand under his.

"I—I thank you. Your doc was—my father."

"Your father?"

"We couldn't seem to—after my mother died—she held him straight. I lost trace of him—always some day I intended—" He stopped.

"Well"—Grace stood up; she took a check from her bag, smoothed it and held it toward the chaplain—"well, this sure is 'rivers returning to their source' stuff."

Chaplain Bud fingered the check.

"Let me see, now. The source of this money was what? The pockets of stable-boys and horse-owners, oil-field workers and cow-punchers, clerks, carpenters, actors, truck-drivers—our army is formed of those very same men. According to dad, from whence it came it should return."

"You mean——"

"We go overseas soon. I think you and dad will agree that the cigarettes, the magazines, the chocolate, all the little comforts this money can buy belong to my men."

Grace regarded him with softened eyes. "You're a thoroughbred, brother."

"I'm wondering"—he smiled—"if you and your sister would care to sing for my boys Wednesday night. I'm holding some informal services——"

"Mister," Grace interrupted, " 'Informal Services' is my middle name. We'll be here."

In New York again, Grace hurried to the apartment where Constance and her mother lived. Entering, she heard a man's voice. Peering into the front room, she saw Freckles Reid in the loudest clothes ever sold in Oklahoma. He was pleading and perspiring lavishly.

"I've stuck to oil till I'm sticky with it. I've got gushers till I'm sick of looking at 'em. I'm worth a million more dollars every time Monday rolls round—and you gave me the tip-off. If you don't marry me, I'll get so drunk I never will sober up. There ain't a diamond in town you can't have by just looking at it. I'll buy you furs that'll make all the other fur-wearing females in this town look like Chinese immigrants. You'll wear nothing but silk the rest of your life. I'll join any church you pick out—and *go* to it, too—if you'll only say you'll marry me. Will you?"

"Uh-huh," beamed Constance.

Grace slipped out of the apartment unnoticed. She realized sharply that she was alone. The doc gone, Constance married; the act had split—for keeps.

The tones of a cornet and the beat of a drum roused her from her reverie. Under the street-lamp on the corner, a company of the Salvation Army were singing, "Bringing in the Sheaves." A quarter dropped into a tambourine, a dime, a nickle.

"What more can they expect—with that song?" Grace mused. "If they'd pull 'Beautiful Island' now!" She thought a moment. "I wonder if they'd take a tip from an old-timer like me who's been through the ropes." She stood listening to a few of the exhortations. "Ain't none of them got the material the doc had. And I know every word of it by heart."

When the company returned to its headquarters that night, Grace followed them. A long time she stood on the sidewalk, her hand on the knob of the door. Finally she opened it.

"I look better in dark blue than Quaker gray, anyway."

BILLY turned the flivver in from the road and brought it to a jolting stop near his kitchen door.

"And that's that," he said.

"Not by several sentences," I objected. "What became of——"

"Oh, Grace went overseas and Beautiful Island-ed herself into eight thousand proposals of marriage and an honorable mention from General Headquarters. You ought to hear some of her experiences. The big scream is her story of how she bumped into her future husband behind a cow-barn in Belgium during a bombing raid."

"I'd like to meet her."

"You're going to—to-morrow at dinner."

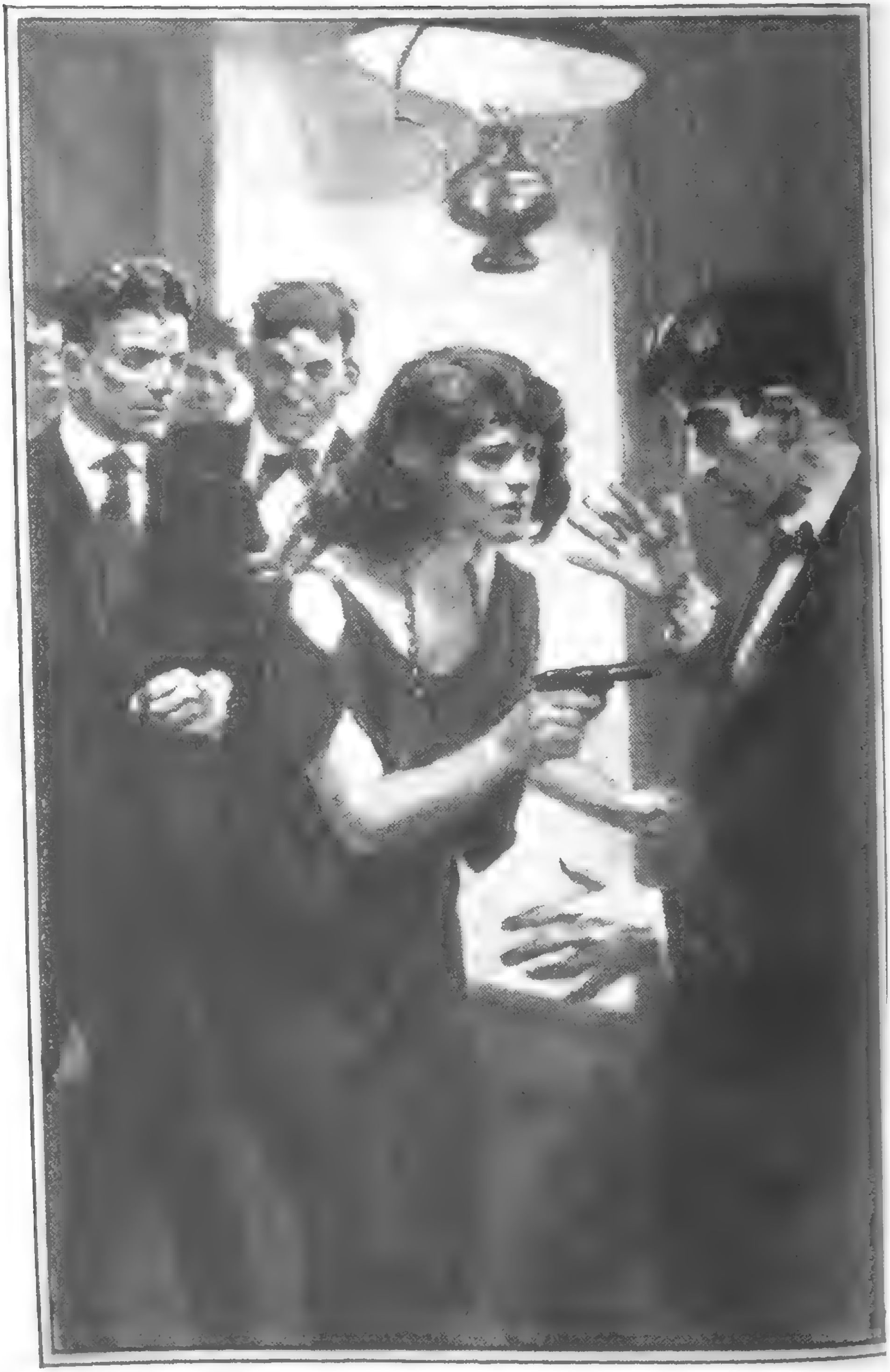
"At dinner! You told me Freda's minister and his wife——"

"That's who I'm talking about—Reverend Bud and Grace." Billy looked critically at the title page of the *War Cry*. "Considering that this publisher is the only one who ever published Bud's 'By and By' song, you'd think him and Grace would subscribe for it by the year, wouldn't you?"

"Well, Billy," I argued, "as the minister of a small church, perhaps he feels he can't afford——"

"Afford? With Grace up in the choir singing 'Beautiful Island' like a soaring angel every third Sunday for the offertory? Oh, boy! You ought to look into this here ecclesiastical stuff."

Everybody's Magazine, November, 1922



"And now *you!*" Flame called, turning with smooth swiftness. "I mean—*you!*"

Those *Who* Dance

A Novel Complete in This Issue

A Woman Goes Down into the Depths to Save Her Brother, Finds a Husband—and Something Greater. It Takes Hold—This Narrative of the Underworld, with its Gunmen and the Women Who Love Them

By George Kibbe Turner

Illustrations by E. Hopper

THOSE who dance in New York are many—of many, many kinds, with many and varied styles and inheritances of dancing. But none dance more continuously, with more zest and exhilaration and appetite for the dance, than the so-called underworld—the little gamblers and the big gamblers and the tin-horn sports, the stalls and the dips, the swell mob and the real good thieves. After nightfall you may be sure that the underworld of New York and its woman are dancing.

It was to one of the best of these functions—for, of course, there are sharp social lines drawn in the underworld—that Flame Carney and her brother The were on their way in their taxi-cab. It was the dance of the semihumorously named Hectic Club, which for many seasons now had been a fixture of the social year, being pulled off in old Jasper Hall every spring upon the first Monday evening after Lent.

You would have known the pair for brother and sister anywhere. They were both clearly of the "Red" Carneys, well known in the old Seventh Ward. But Flame was properly enough the handsomer—the flower of the tribe, who had raised to its highest point the unusual qualities of family temper and hair which had given her her name.

She was showing now a little of the former as the taxi passed recklessly through the overcrowded streets.

"Out for a 'caravan!' " she said, with sharp criticism. "To-night of all nights!"

"It's a big one," replied The Carney unemotionally. "We can't afford to miss it."

"You might give me one night when I could be easy—long enough to enjoy myself."

"More than that," he went on, in the way men talk to women on business matters. "This was the best possible night for it. The dicks will all be resting easy, knowing we're all in here. And, if our foot should slip, anyway," he continued, in her rather sullen silence, "we're safe just the same—up to being nailed flat."

"How?" she asked him harshly.

"The simplest thing in the world. I'll go in with the Floor Committee into the old side room, and we'll slip out the old side door into the alley. And there won't be one in ten but will think we're there. Talk about your alibis! We'll have right here two hundred people who will swear their heads off that we never left the hall. And don't forget," he ended, for they were now on the dingy street of old Jasper Hall, "when this is pulled off, it will mean something more to you than a dance."

"Yes—when it's pulled off," she said, still sullenly.

"You're a sweet-singing song-bird, ain't you?" he asked her angrily, touched by the good thieves' ancient superstition—the fear of the inauspicious word.

"If I had my way, you'd be back at your trade," she told him.

"Well, forget it. It's fixed now, anyhow."

They went together into the hall—danced the first dance together without speaking; and Flame Carney passed on to her many other partners and the excitements of the evening.

They dance, they say, the underworld—the good thieves and the bad and their women—partly to forget, largely because life becomes so dull and tasteless between the periodic excitements of their profession—making the dance an institution, like gambling, or the "hop" or "snow" for the older and more worn, an established institution of the underworld—a fact which brings the underworld and its woman into much closer and more ardent fellowship in the pleasures of life than the upper world and its wife perhaps ever attain.

Flame Carney, caught up into the bright excitement of the swell dance of the good thieves, lost herself half deliberately, like the rest—did not even notice when it was that her brother slipped away.

"A CARAVAN from Arabia" might seem to the uninitiated eye a big, tarpaulined, unpoetical motor-truck. Yet silk may be the loading of motor-trucks as it was long years ago of the camels; and if it is not technically a desert these modern caravans traverse, yet there are few more desolate wastes for their extent on this continent than the Jersey marshes—the meadows of the Hackensack, through which the new caravans from the silk-manufacturing country just west of them must pass to the great city of New York.

This particular caravan crawled like a clumsy bug across the interminable straight line of the road that cuts these marshes, its two white lights focusing upon its whitened path ahead, till suddenly it stopped, when three men with handkerchiefs on their lower faces flagged it, and one on either side swung up with his automatic.

It was but a few minutes before the two men on the front seat were trussed and put in the discard—laid to rest behind a pile of rotting ties thrown aside from one of the many railroads which cut across the deserted swamp—left to wait for rescue in the morning.

Their three captors removed their handkerchiefs and swung up on the seat of the caravan. And again the great brown bug pushed the white spot before it eastward, a tall, red-haired man driving.

It had not gone very far before, in the darkness of the hood over the seat, there was the sound of ugly talking.

"Let me ask you this," said the man sitting on the right of the three, speaking with a somewhat foreign accent underneath the patois of New York: "If you're all right, what was it you were talking over that other night—in there shut up with Slip Blaney?"

Another, in the middle, called him a liar. Evidently Slip Blaney, whoever he might be, was a person not to be seen closeted with. The dialogue tended to increasing bitterness—the worse and more threatening for the fact that both men were armed.

"Shut up, you damned dumb-bells!" said the big red man driving. "If you don't, I'll take a hand in this myself. Close up, Joe!" he said to the man with the long, straight nose on the end, who seemed to be the aggressor in the quarrel. "This is a hell of a time to start a thing like this!"

"Yeah?" replied the one in the middle. "And it will be a hell of a nice time to wake up some night like this and find ourselves trapped by this thing. What I say is, if the damned wop is a belcher, there's no time or place no better than right now to croak him."

"You could go ahead and finish it right now—both of you—for all of me," said the large man, "if it wasn't for leaving me here with this cargo on my hands. Now, close your teeth together."

Both men started doing what he told them to. But before obeying finally, Joe, the foreigner, made one more statement, in the manner of the hot-headed southern Europeans from whom he was apparently descended.

"Listen," he said, with a great oath; "if I ever did know—if it was ever showed to me that you belched, I'd get you, if I went to the chair for it the next minute."

He had hardly stopped speaking when dim figures sprang up from the side of the raised road, two of them apparently lifting up motor-cycles.

"The dicks, you rat!" cried Joe the Greek, and, drawing his cannon, so-called, suddenly, while the attention of the man with whom he had been quarreling was leveled out before him, shot him through the head. Then the shooter was off the seat of the still moving truck—back through the detached hood, and had swung free with his still smoking automatic into the darkness beside the wheels. But he had hardly hit the road when another man, in citizen's clothes—a detective, evidently—was beside him.

And now a very singular and unexpected thing happened. The fugitive stopped, passed the warm weapon into the detective's hand, looked round, and, without a word from either, had plunged through the darkness down the raised bank into the edge of the great meadows—in which at night there would have been not one chance in ten of locating a man at all wise in his movements.

The man who now had the pistol slipped it into his pocket, and after hastily examining the dead man in the road, ran toward the truck. It had stopped now. The one man left upon it had evidently decided it was useless to outspeed the motor-cycles with his lumbering vehicle, or put up a fight with four armed police while he was doing it.

The detective reached the truck just as the two men on motor-cycles were dismounting, keeping the driver's hands up.

"Wait! I'll frisk him!" he said to the others, in the voice of a man in the position of commander. And, climbing up upon the seat, he took another automatic from the right-hand coat pocket of the driver, who sat staring at him until he was finished and was down.

"Slip Blaney! By God!" the driver said then, like a man coming out of a daze.

"Yes, The, my boy," replied the detective's pleased, suave voice. "And this is the time we've got you right. Come on back here," he said now to the two men on foot. "We'll take a look at what's back here in the road." And leaving the two motor-cycle men to guard the prisoner, he passed back with the others to the crushed heap on the roadway.

"That's the other one," said Slip Blaney, turning him over under his flash-light. "That's Black Tony Vachris."

"It *was*, you mean," said another man, a young-looking officer, dismissing the horrible object he was looking at with a show of bravado.

"And here's what did it," said Blaney, drawing out an automatic from his pocket. "Have we got him to rights this time?"

"Oh, no!" the other one assented.

"This means the chair," said Slip Blaney.

THE widows, so-called, of the good thieves are more inglorious figures than the widows of sailors and soldiers killed in action—but their emotions are not necessarily less poignant, even if, so to speak, less recognized by the strict letter of the law; and their creation by death by violence is not—counted relatively as to numbers—so much more infrequent.

Death never lies so very far from the path of the good thief, even in his hours of pleasure—as the walls of old Jasper Hall could abundantly testify if they could but speak. A dispute over a dance between members of the Hectic Club, a few barks of the cannon outside the entrance, a scurry of feet, a dead man on the sidewalk, and inside—dancing still, perhaps—his widow.

They dance, the women of the thieves, perhaps more for excitement, to forget—more as an act of bravado, even, than the good thieves themselves. A flirt of short bright skirts in the face of fate, and their dancing-days are ended—by death perhaps, by separation from their dancing partners very possibly—in that primitive and almost savage relation of the good thieves and their women, which is so easily and quickly begun and ended without sanction of the law. But even this relation, immoral as it is, has the quality of its defects, breeds a certain quick and almost hysterical courage, a certain desperate loyalty, which is perhaps inherent in the position of woman without protection of any law in her relations with the man she elects to live with.

There was one widow dancing that night, Flick Kramer, the woman of Black Tony Vachris—a white-faced girl, with a wide, thin line of reddened lips, who danced with all the more abandon and bravado among the heavy men and their slender thin-faced girls from her knowledge of the danger that was on—until at last, toward dawn, "the wireless" from police headquarters brought in the news of what had happened in the Jersey meadows.

Then, of course, the hysterical collapse, the disheveled bunches of hair tumbling from beside her ears, and the pale face paler for its white complexion-paste, and the wide lips red from the lip-stick—the sudden transformation of the dancing woman into a heap of light silken fabric.

The woman of Straight-nosed Joe, the Greek, was not there at the dance of the Hectic Club that night—it having been found better, to her intense disappointment, that her partner be at home that night, quite ill.

But there was a third woman, of course, in the affair—in a peculiar position. Not a widow—not divorced, as the woman of the good thief becomes when the latter is sent up to prison—although the good thief whose flat she kept was in a jam now, and a very bad one. For Flame Carney was the sister, not the mistress of the man she lived with. And The Carney, whose tribal and family traditions on marriage ran back, without his knowledge of the fact, some hundreds or thousands of years before the good thieves of New York or New York itself existed, saw to it that she stayed with him alone. And although she went in and out among the women of the good thieves, without reflection upon or questioning of their moral standing, she still kept for herself the inheritances in the matter of women's morals of the Red Carneys.

She went home in the first light of morning in her taxi-cab—alone—her cheek-bones showing more prominently than usual in her flushed face. She knew what she must do—telephone to the good thieves' lawyer, who would reach the good thieves' professional bondsmen—their politicians—pull the many strings of justice and politics and business which the good thief, in a jam in New York, has already arranged in advance to have pulled for him.

A YEAR is a long time in the life of a woman situated as Flame Carney was—even if relatively short in the course of a trial for murder. But now the end of Lent was here again, and the annual ball of the Hectic Club on Easter Monday but a week off; and, by an unpleasant coincidence, the death of The Carney was set for that very week of the fixed festival of Christendom and the good thieves.

Flame Carney looked little enough like dancing now. Her face was thin; her dress was almost shabby. If she had lived high on crooked money in the past, there was little enough left to worry her conscience to-day—some thirty-five dollars in all when she took out her purse in the Grand Central Station to buy a ticket to Ossining. The lawyers, the court-costs, the politicians big and little had disposed of most of the vanished remainder.

They brought her finally, when she had reached Sing Sing prison as the one close relation of the condemned man, to his cell. She spoke to The, keeping her distance, the deputy watching them.

"Now, listen, Flame!" said The Carney, after a while. It was a very different The Carney from the prosperous thief with strong political connections. His voice was hoarse, his complexion sick, and his eyes—the green-blue eyes of the Red Carneys—looked out steadily at her from between his prominent cheek-bones. "If things shouldn't go the way we hope for——"

"But they will!" his sister broke in.

"Well, say they don't," he said briefly. "They might not. It isn't as if the thing was all tied up."

"They've got to!" she insisted, her color growing suddenly in her pale face. "We're going to get our commutation unless they're all lying to me. The governor is going our way."

"Yes—but, on the other hand, you want to remember there's quite a drag against us yet—influences you can't figure out—all that business crowd—all the police."

"The police!" said Flame Carney, as one speaks of a disgusting thing. "We showed up how they swore their heads off about that cannon—the one they slid in on you—in place of yours."

"Sure!" said The Carney. "They would. They had to, didn't they?"

"To save their own dirty skins—the rats!"

"But you've got to remember, too, that Blaney put up quite a tale proving that gun was mine. He could. Trust him!"

"That's one thing I never could see."

"What's that?"

"Why, sitting there, you didn't nail it on one of them—remember what bull it was that shot Tony."

"Haven't I told you a hundred times," replied The Carney in the voice of one impatiently reopening an old dispute, "that you couldn't see anything for sure in that light, moving along the way we were?

"But that's done and over with," he told her, when she didn't answer. "What I was saying now to you is, remember this: Either way—if things go right—or go wrong, the opposite of what we hope for—I want you to go over with me how you stand—either way. If the best happens, if I get my sentence commuted, I will be in jail still—won't I?—and you alone outside."

"Never mind me. Forget it!"

"How much have you got left?" he insisted.

"Never mind. I can take care of myself."

"You might," said The Carney dryly. "But it's no harm to have a boost now and then, is it?"

"No," said Flame Carney ungraciously.

It was a funny thing to listen to. The two Red Carneys, either one of whom would have given his life for the other, were speaking curtly, almost with hostility, to one another—each one with the set purpose of considering the other and the other only.

"All right," said the brother. "Just remember this, then: Any time, if you ever need anything, you go to Straight-nosed Joe and tell him I said to come on through. He owes me something, and he'll pay it to you—if he isn't a rat."

"He's paid you a lot already in this—in your trial, with the governor," observed his sister, watching him.

"He hasn't paid me all yet," said Carney. "You get me?"

"I get you," replied Flame Carney. "Now, are you through with that? If you are, let's talk about yourself."

And she talked about what she could do for him, as women do when their men are in trouble—even the women of thieves—worrying grotesquely now about his warmth and food and health and all the small creature comfort swhich women worry over lest their men go without.

"Time's up," said the deputy warden.

Flame Carney might have broken down entirely if she had been a soft thing, a mere domestic woman, and not a Red Carney, and schooled carefully in the unwritten laws which govern the lives of the women of the good thieves.

As it was, she bit the inside of her lip until it bled, and smiled the old, straight, fighting smile of the Carneys—kissing her brother and joshing him, and covering over that continual fear that it might be the last time she'd ever see him.

FLAME CARNEY raised up her desperate eyes as she heard her name called.

"Look! Come over here," said the ivory-blond girl who had waved out from the line of those waiting for the arriving passengers. Flame Carney noticed then the discoloration on the almost too fair skin beneath her eye.

"How'd you come to meet me here today, Vida?" Flame asked her.

"You told me you were going up the river this afternoon, didn't you? So, then, I waited for you—till you came."

"Well, what's the game?"

"Look! Come on over here," said the woman of Joe Anargas, glancing nervously round and then going on ahead alone to the women's waiting-room, where they found seats.

"What's he been doing to you now?" asked Flame, noticing again the discoloration beneath the thick powder on the fair skin. Flame Carney never cared for that kind herself—with their soft skins and their soft souls, and their baby-blue eyes that got red after any excitement. And yet she had played in with this one.

"Beating me up some more," replied Vida Vernon, as she called herself—hiding her real name, as the women of the thieves do, partly because they think they have found a more ornamental one, partly for other reasons.

"And you stand for it?" cried Flame.

"You poor dummy! If you had the nerve of a flea—" she said, starting up in anger.

The other pulled her down again quickly into her seat.

"That's what I'm here for," she said, looking round apprehensively. "To see you."

"What?"

"I'm through with him!" said the woman of Straight-nosed Joe.

"Through?"

"Yes; if you can help me."

"Help you?"

"Will you help me—if I help you?" Flame Carney stared at her. "How much longer has The got," asked Vida Vernon.

"You know. Five days—till Tuesday next week."

VIDA looked about her once more at the inoffensive occupants of the room and leaned forward.

"I can save him," she said then, in the low, emotionless voice of the well-trained woman of the thief. "And I'm the only one who can."

"What do you mean?" asked Flame Carney, gripping the other's wrist until she flinched.

"You think the governor's coming through — that he'll commute The's sentence?"

"I sure do!" said Flame Carney, the sharpness of sudden fear in her voice now.

"Forget it! You lose."

"Lose?"

"He's jobbed," the other woman said.

"That's great news!" said Flame Carney sarcastically.

"From start to finish," the other went on. "By everybody—way up to the governor."

"What are you raving about?" asked Flame, but her voice was hoarse with apprehension.

"He never killed Tony Vachris."

"Say—you're full of news to-day!"

"And neither did the cops—the way you think they did—the way they tried to show it at the trial."

"Who did, then?" asked Flame, a light of fear coming to her eyes—a special fear rising from many little apprehensions she had felt before.

"Joe did."

"Joe!"

"Shut up!" said the other, looking round. "Joe and Blaney," she went on in a low voice. "It was a frame-up from the first." And she rehearsed the details—the plant of local cops under Blaney upon the Jersey road; the plan of Joe and Blaney for Joe's getaway, and the switching of the automatic pistols.

"Who was in this?" asked Flame Carney, with dry mouth after a motionless silence.

"Just those two—they pulled it off on the others—all just common country bulls out working under Blaney——"

"And what was it all about? What was there in it?" went on Flame Carney.

Vida Vernon told her—one fact after another.

"They were out to break it up—the silk people. They got word to Blaney they'd slip him five thousand on the side. And he got word to Joe that he'd split fifty-fifty—if Joe'd turn the whole thing up."

"Joe!"

"He's been playing with Blaney for months. Both him and Black Tony. Behind The's back."

"But at that," objected Flame Carney, "why should they go out and croak Tony?"

"He claimed that he and Blaney knew he was going to squeal on them. He might have been. I don't say he wasn't."

"But why frame it onto The?"

"You know why that was."

"No."

"You ought to. It was you!"

"Me!" cried Flame Carney, staring.

"You remember that time Joe got gay with you—and The smashed him before the bunch?"

"They made that up long ago."

"Yes," said Vida Vernon. "They do—that kind—always! He'd be likely to."

"Me!" repeated Flame, staring ahead. "I don't believe it! If it was so—why hasn't The told me all this?"

"Because that's the frame-up," the other one told her. "He couldn't tell you or anybody else—the way they had it fixed. Joe got word to him that he'd go to the front if The gave the word. He had to do that much." Flame Carney, instructed in the code of the good thieves, nodded. "Just as he knew—that The would never squeal."

"A swell chance," said Flame, confirming her, "that The would turn informer to the police after all these years."

"Sure!" said Vida. "Joe knew that,

naturally. And he knew he'd never drag him into the thing if he died for it. Besides that, he could make it out that it would be better always for one of them to be out around, with his hands free, pulling things right among the pols and the lawyers, than to have both of them sitting there canned, eating their hearts out and getting nailed together, with nobody really interested out pulling on the ropes."

"Sure!" assented Flame Carney, seeing the sound foundation of that statement in the affairs of the world of thieves. "And then what?"

"Then he double-crossed him—that's all."

"Double-crossed him?"

"Yes. All along the line. Working all the time with Blaney—to railroad The on through to the chair."

"But Blaney—why should he be out to bump off The?"

"How do I know? What reason has he had for all the rest he's framed up that got in his way somewhere? A man's life means no more to that man than an alley cat's."

"That's right," said Flame Carney, remembering all the other things that went round the underworld about that murderer.

"They wanted him dead—both of them—I know that," said Vida Vernon. "And they had big help—the silk people, who take Blaney's word naturally on anything—wouldn't they?"

"All right. Say they would."

"And all the time they were feeding The and you and the rest with glad tales that everything was going right—up to now—when you all get the sure tip that the governor's coming through."

"Isn't he?" asked Flame Carney, with a sudden clutch of her sleeve.

"A swell chance—with the police and the big business bunch and their special pols and private wires all pulling the same direction! And Blaney steering them all!"

"You're trying to tell me——"

"I'm telling you the truth," reaffirmed Joe Anargas's woman. "You know how The is. He thinks everybody's like himself. They've stalled him along—advising him what defense to make—getting him in deeper and deeper. And then, next week—those two are free! Dead men tell no tales."

"Why should you come out with this—now—at this late day?" cried Flame.

"This—for one thing!" the other replied, lifting her hand, freed again, to the discoloration of her face. "But that's only part. Don't you see—the rest—how I'll stand when The's gone? I'll be the next in line, won't I? The only one left that knows besides themselves. How long do you think it will be before they pull me out of the river? Especially with him hitting the hootch the way he is now."

"Is he at that again?"

"Oh, awful! He's jumping shadows this last week—till this is over."

"Five days!" exclaimed Flame Carney dully. "Four, you might say! And now you come round and pass this to me—at this time. And you my friend—or claim to be!" she said, with a burst of savage scorn.

"What would I do—with him threatening to blow my head off? What would you do?" pleaded the other thief's woman, evidently of softer metal—on the verge of tears. "Besides—I came through finally, didn't I?"

"Yes. You came through nice!" replied Flame Carney bitterly—practically convinced now by the woman's manner and her own knowledge of the probabilities of the case that she was telling the truth, but still testing her out. "But why—which can I believe? Will he kill you—or won't he—for telling me now any more than he did?"

"Can't you see how I'm fixed?" pleaded the other. "I've got to tell it to somebody. I've got to—to have somebody else know—or where am I? I've to get him before he gets me—that's all. You don't know those knife-carriers—those dagoes. You don't know what I'm up against!" Her reddening eyes were filling up with tears.

"Here—cut that!" directed Flame Carney, jarring her softness with purposely harsh speech. "Look! You say you bring this to me—to help me. And you figure, somehow, I'm going to help you back—save your life—or don't you?"

"We could hitch up between us, I thought," the Vernon girl answered weakly.

"How?" asked Flame in a sharp voice, convinced now by her manner of the unnerving truth. "How? At this late hour?"

THE two women started talking, debating together some plan for the prevention of the disaster hanging over them—each from her own angle, reasoning according to the habits and social codes round them.

"Why couldn't you come yourself—up to the flat with us—and tell him that The had sent you to stay with us—to be on the ground with him, talking things over these last days. He couldn't refuse you that—not the way he's fixed with The now. You could live there—we've got that extra bedroom in the flat. And maybe you could tell him," Vida said, with a sudden inspiration from her fear, "that The had spilled everything to you and you could start and pump it all out of him."

"And incidentally get you out from being croaked—by bringing me in," returned the Carney girl scornfully. "And then have the Greek hop the town the next train—leaving me at the last minute with another earful of wind to hand to the governor and the district attorney—just contrary to everything we've been telling them up to date. Oh, no! Try again!"

"Well—suppose you did this—" said Vida, trying again. "Suppose you came in and played you didn't know anything at all—but was just sent there by The for us to look after you? And you didn't say anything to the Greek about it? Just laid low?"

"Well?"

"And then, nights, I could get him talking in the bedroom next to yours. He'll be jawing and threatening me all night, especially if he keeps after the hootch, as he probably will. And you could listen in—through our window." And she showed in detail the arrangement of the fire-escape between the windows of the flat's two bedrooms.

"What if I did hear it—all? What could I do with it—at this late day? Who'd believe it—coming from me alone—all contrary to everything we've all sworn our heads off to up to now—to our trying to prove it was the police themselves that shot Vachris?"

"Well—that's so, I suppose," the other had to admit dispiritedly at last.

So that idea was given up.

"I TELL you what you do," said Vida, looking up suddenly again.

"What?"

"Oh nothing!" she said, her enthusiasm going as suddenly as it came. "You wouldn't do it."

"What won't I do?" the other girl insisted.

"If you were like anybody else, you might double up with a man and come in. But you wouldn't do that. You're too good. You wouldn't do that—to save your life!" she said, with an intimation of resentment and scorn.

"Go ahead," directed Flame, ignoring this. "What's the idea? Get it off your chest."

"You could get some guy that's crazy over you. There's a dozen I know myself that would go the limit for you—if you'd come through and be human——"

"Go on," said Flame Carney.

"And you could slip him in with you. Tell Joe we'd run the flat fifty-fifty—the way that so many of them are doing—especially lately, since the bright lights have been turned down. And Joe would fall for it, too. He's most broke—hollering his head off about expenses. He's Poverty's slave the last six months."

"Say he would!"

"That would work!" exclaimed Vida, catching Flame's dress with a sudden flush of hope. "Joe'd fall for that—if he was sure of the guy—quicker than he would for you alone. It would be more natural—as well as cheaper. He wouldn't be on his guard the way he would with you alone. Then we could work that gag of letting you and the other guy listen in from the fire-escape."

"And then?"

"Then you could come in and beat it out of him. He's not much—the shape he's got himself into now. Any decent guy could handle him—pound the story out of him."

"Yes," objected Flame Carney; "and have him deny it all when we brought him in to the governor or the district attorney."

"I told you you wouldn't do it!" exclaimed Vida Vernon, resentful at being stopped at the edge of a possible solution.

"Do what?"

"Wouldn't go through with it, not to save your life—or The's. You're too good. You're real business," she asserted in angry disappointment, "is picking the spots off of Spotless Town."

"Why? Who said I wouldn't?" Flame Carney came back, with a still bitterer scorn. "What do you think I am? With The where he is, I'd be a nice specimen of a rat—wouldn't I?—if I balked at anything. Especially knowing what I do now—that The's going to the chair—that the whole thing started with that row because of me!"

The other looked up sharply, surprised, evidently, but hoping now that the Carney girl had put aside her old scruples and that they were making progress now toward something.

"It's the way—the only way," she asserted, with strongly forced positiveness. "If you'll only say you'll do it——"

"Don't fret about me," Flame reassured her. "That I won't come through—on that, or anything. But what would be the use? That's what I've got yet to see."

They went on canvassing the situation.

"You've got four days now—starting to-morrow, you might say."

"Yes."

"And what you've got to do is to convince the governor or the district attorney or the police headquarters in that time."

"That's right. But would those dirty buzzards pay attention to anything we pass to them—when they're framing The up for the chair?"

"You want to get it out of your mind, remember," the Vernon girl reminded her, "that the police were all in this. It was only Blaney that framed The up."

"You believe that, do you?" asked Flame.

"I know it."

"But can it be done—that way—in that time? How will you convince them by that scheme of yours—even if they are on the level?"

"You've got to start something—haven't you?—right away."

"I'll say so! This minute, if I could," said Flame Carney, her whole life staked on the enterprise, now she was convinced the other woman told the truth.

"And we can work it out—plan it along, after we get in it," urged the other.

"I know. But what about getting it through?"

"All we can do—" the other began, and then stopped, seeing a little start that Flame Carney gave. "What is it?" she asked. "What hit you?"

"I just thought——"

"Of what?"

"Of—" Flame said, looking up, and stopped. "A man," she finished.

"Who?"

"Never mind. I'll tell you that if I can work it."

"What?"

"Never mind," said Flame, turning the talk. "But we agree on this, don't we? There's only just one thing we can do now. Slip a man in there with me."

"That's sure," said Vida Vernon, still looking at her surprised—with that baby stare that light blondes have.

"All right," said Flame Carney. "I'll have one there to-morrow night some way."

THE first weeks of the man in brand-new police equipment are full of bewilderments and anxieties. So many things must be done—so many more avoided. There are so many forces, normal and abnormal, focusing upon him. But this experience of John Kane was certainly most difficult to understand—not to say stand still under.

"What's this?" he said to himself, keeping steady, while his mind jumped forty ways. "Are they trying to make out that I'm a crook with a record?"

Monahan, the head of the detective force, was no more committal than is the habit of his profession. He did the questioning—using John Kane's examination-papers which he was holding in his hands.

"You're five feet eleven. Blue eyes. A hundred and eighty pounds."

"Yes, sir," said John Kane stiffly. "That's all right—just as you've got it there."

And the chief of detectives turned to examine again the stand of photographs, arranged on leaves swinging like a book's, before which they stood together. He looked up at Kane, and back again.

"It's near enough," he stated. "The best we can do, anyhow."

"What is this thing?" broke out John Kane finally. "Do you think you've got me mugged there—in the rogues' gallery? What's coming on here?"

"The chance of your lifetime, maybe," stated Monahan briefly—and turned and pointed a fat finger at one face in the page of photographs. "That's the one—'Scar' Henry," he said, pointing.

"You think I'm him?" asked John Kane hotly.

"Do you look like him—or don't you?" asked Monahan, with now a spark of humor in his light-blue eyes.

"I don't know—do I?" asked John Kane, his voice hardening a little under the strain.

"The most of any man in this department," said Monahan, his plump face now loosening up a bit as he placed his hand on the young officer's shoulder. "You're in luck," he said, "or, maybe, you are— I don't know. Come on over here and sit down and we'll find out."

"Do you want to take a chance at making a name for yourself—your first fortnight on the force?" he asked, when they had sat down.

"How will I?" returned John Kane.

"You saw that picture I was showing you?"

"Yes."

"That's Scar Henry—one of the best thieves in this country. One of the mob from the West—from Colorado. He broke jail out there three weeks ago. Well, we're looking for a ringer for him inside the force—right now on a hurry job. And you come nearest to qualifying."

"I get that much," said John Kane.

"For a little game we've got on. Are you there? Have you got a strong heart?" asked the chief, with a faint grin.

"I might have," Kane answered.

"All right. And are you married?"

"Married—no!" said Kane. "What's that got to do with it?"

"Quite a bit," said the chief of detectives. And he went on and told him partly what he was after. "I can trust you, can I?" he asked.

"I guess you can—yes," said Kane briefly.

"I'll take the chance, anyhow. You've got good people vouching for you." John Kane answered not at all. "But this is a close inside job," went on Monahan, drawing his chair closer, as if the walls of the police department had ears—as many claim they have. "We're after somebody inside the department—who has been under suspicion before."

"I see," said John Kane. "And you want me to impersonate this big Western crook?"

"Yes; and it's some job."

"Yeah?" asked Kane, undisturbed.

"He might even drop in here—into New York—and give you a close-up. He was in Chi the last we heard."

"All right," said Kane. "Let him. But what about that scar that he's named from—there on his right cheek?"

"Oh, that's easy fixed. We'll paint you up."

"So it'll stick?"

"Oh, well enough."

"Let it go at that," said Kane. "Now, then, one more thing——"

"What?"

"What's being married got to do with it?"

"I'll let her tell you."

"Her!" exclaimed John Kane.

"Look!" said the chief of detectives, not answering him. "I'm going over to my office now—see? Alone. And in about three minutes you drift along over—so we won't be seen together."

"I get you," said Kane.

"You'll get the whole story there," said Monahan, "first-hand. You may not want to go through with it when you hear it. That's up to you."

John Kane saluted as his superior went out.

THE tall, straight girl with the straight mouth and the wonderful head of flame-red hair stood up and looked John Kane over, sizing him up as he came into the smaller office.

"Miss Carney," said the chief, introducing her. "Sit down, Officer. Now, then," he said to the girl, when Kane had done so, "you've seen him?"

"Yes," said the girl.

"Do you want to go on?"

"Yes."

'All right, then," said Monahan. "Now I'll tell it to him in your presence—so you'll see he gets it right. How much have I told you before?" he asked John Kane.

"Nothing," Kane answered shortly. Being a little embarrassed in the presence of this unknown, cold-looking, very handsome girl, he kept his eyes strictly on the chief.

"You're willing to take that for the truth?" asked Monahan of the girl.

"Go ahead," said Flame Carney impatiently.

"You heard about that thing over in the Jersey meadows," said Monahan, looking over now at Kane, "a year ago, in one of those silk-mill auto robberies, where a party named Carney bumped off a dago named Vachris—Black Tony Vachris? And was picked up by Blaney and a squad from Jersey City?" John Kane nodded. "Well, Carney's her brother," said Monahan, jerking his thumb toward the girl.

John Kane did not look at her.

"All right, sir," he said.

SO THE chief of detectives went on from there and told Kane the story for the first time—Kane's eyes upon him still, and the girl's eyes, as Kane knew well, always watching, studying himself.

"It's a frame-up, you see," said Monahan, summing up; "so she says. Between this Greek and Slip Blaney, here in this bureau, to railroad her brother to the chair."

"I get that."

"And there's just four days to work in, counting to-day."

"All right."

"I'll tell you now," said Monahan, turning to the girl and talking the gruff way a man in his position talks to a thief or a thief's woman, "you'd had a swell chance of getting me into this thing here—coming in the way you did—if there hadn't been other dope before—on this man of mine—you know who"—avoiding using Blaney's name always when he could. "If some of the things you claim hadn't fitted in with other things we had about his movements—about the pistols that time, for instance—the story at the start that there were three instead of two."

"All right," said John Kane, breaking in, trying to help out the girl—make her more comfortable from the old chief's going after her—and forgetting his own position for the minute. "But what's next? What am I going to do?"

"Are you in a hurry?" said the chief, giving him the cold eye.

"No, sir; not in particular."

"Then wait a minute," said Monahan—and then went on after a minute, looking past him, speaking to the girl. "It's some idea," he said. "I'll give you credit for that."

"Was there any other way?" asked the girl in a quick, hard, rebellious voice, "that would work out?"

"I don't suppose there was."

"Was there any other you could think of?" she insisted in a still harder voice, and looked as she said it, John Kane thought, with especial bitterness and resentment toward him, as if for some reason she had a special grudge against him in connection with her scheme, whatever it was. "Was there anything else that could possibly work for me—in the time we've got?"

"There was not," Monahan was answering. "And I don't even know that this one will work in the time, either."

"Listen," said Kane finally, looking from one to the other; "as long as we've got this far, let me in on this thing—if you don't mind, sir," he put in, recollecting himself again.

"I just told you," said the chief in reply, "about her brother four days from the chair. And all the various moves they've made to drag him out from under—and fallen down."

"Yes."

"And now she says—and she's right—there's just one way to save him."

"How?" asked John Kane.

The eyes of the girl, like a watchful, defiant wild thing in a corner never left his face now.

"To get a stay—of any kind—for him. She's got to convince the department and the district attorney's office that this frame-up—this story of hers I just gave you—is right."

"I get that," said Kane.

"In four days."

"Yes."

"And there's just one way in the world that would really do that business with us now. And that is to show us—our own man—our own agent."

"Meaning me—if I go?" said Kane.

"Right!"

"And how'll I get in—work that out—in four days' time?"

"There's only one way in the world for that, too."

"What?"

"She's got to get you in herself. Got to introduce you. Bring you right in where you can get to this man himself—this Greek—so he'll spill himself."

"Me—a stranger—in four days!" said Kane. "How?"

"I'll show you how. It's her scheme—not mine, you understand," said Monahan, putting his position on record. "And you don't have to do it, understand, unless you want to."

John Kane felt the hungry, resentful eyes of the girl always on him—saw the strain and tension of the waiting grow on her.

"Go ahead," he answered. "Please."

"I'll say this," the chief went on, looking over now at the girl herself—taking his own time: "You're right. It's the only chance in the world you've got—always assuming you're telling the truth—and the only way to get a man from the department inside that bunch of yours in that time. I'll have to give you credit for that."

"What is it?" asked John Kane again in a little louder and more peremptory voice than is usually employed with a superior. But he was always that way more or less from a boy; he could never stand by and see anything in trouble—a woman especially.

"You know how they live over there—those good thieves with money?" Monahan asked him finally—when he wanted to. "In those flats, with their women," he said, and named the locality.

"I've heard about it," said Kane.

The girl's hard, handsome set face did not change, he noticed, a particle, when the chief mentioned the women. He wondered for a second what she was—what her real history had probably been.

"All right," said the chief. "She proposes to get you in—to live in this man's—this Straight-nosed Joe's flat with him and his woman."

"How?"

"By your doubling up with her—and starting housekeeping with this other couple," said Monahan simply and definitely.

THE man and woman faced each other, looked into each others eyes—a long, straight, level look. It was John Kane who drew his eyes away first, paying attention to what Monahan was telling him.

"Now, then, you'll ask me," said the chief, anticipating, "just how she'll work you in there with that Greek and his woman—at that. Or probably you've got an idea already—from that in the other room there," he suggested, jerking his thumb back toward the rogues' gallery—"that Scar Henry." John Kane barely nodded, watching him. "Do you see?" his superior asked him. "She gets you in as a good thief—somebody this Greek would know is right."

"Yes."

"On the other hand, she can't make you out as some local crook—somebody that gang would know. So what does she do? And quite a slick idea, too," said Monahan. "She thinks up this Scar Henry, who was a side-partner of this brother of hers when he was out a year working through Colorado. Is that right?" he asked the girl.

"Yes," she said, her lips barely moving.

"But who's known all over as a big thief. And who they know she knows all about from his being with her brother. And she tells them she's bringing him with her into this flat."

'I get you," said Kane, looking first as if he were going to say something more, but then setting his lips close together.

"You see how she figures," continued the chief. "She's a close friend herself of this Greek's woman—this Vida Vernon, she calls herself. And then she can tell the Greek that her brother The is asking it—and he can't refuse under the circumstances—not while her brother's living, anyhow—always holding over him the chance of spilling what really did happen out on the Jersey meadows that night. You get that?"

"I get you—yes," said Kane, but stopped there without going any further, waiting for the other one.

"So I picked you out for this job," said the chief, winding up his explanation, "first, because you were like this Scar Henry in a general way. Second, because you're a new cop, and nobody's had time to spot you yet—whereas they'd spot an older man on the force sure. And, third, because I know your record—or know those that do. And I think I can trust you with a ticklish job. But you don't have to do it, remember," he added, seeing Kane's face, "if you don't want to. You understand that."

John Kane looked down, looked up, and, seeing the tense eyes of the girl upon him still, asked a question.

"Let me get this right," he said. "I'm to impersonate this Scar Henry?"

"Yes."

"Who's supposed to be living with her?"

"But never has!" said the girl fiercely, breaking in for the first time of her own accord.

Both men looked at her—and looked away, defeated by her eyes.

"But I'm to live with her—in this flat, with this Greek and his woman—pretending we are man and wife," Kane went on, after a little silence, looking at his superior steadily. "Is that it?"

He had been a decent boy, with a good, decent mother, and he didn't want to be starting in wrong in the department—to get to be used right away in the kind of work they use some of them for, with women.

"Yes; but you don't have to," Monahan told him again.

John Kane looked down, considering. It might be quite a chance, and yet, at that—Then he looked up—into the eyes of the girl, stared into them, in spite of himself—caught by their expression—the fierce anxiety there that was more than pleading.

There was something else there, too, that he might not have expected. Those eyes looked to him like the eyes of a woman who is straight—an eye which a man brought up like John Kane on the streets of a city like New York gets to think he knows.

"I'll go!" said John Kane, on an impulse, looking into the steady eyes of that thief's woman. They stood up now face to face, Monahan standing between them.

"You're satisfied to do this thing, then?" he asked Kane.

"Yes."

"Are you?" he asked the girl. "With him?"

"I am—yes," she answered in a dry voice.

It seemed to John Kane—the whole thing—the way they stood with Monahan at one side between them—to be in a kind of crazy way like a marriage ceremony.

What the girl thought, of course, he could not know. She stood stock-still, facing in his direction, close beside him. He saw beneath her blue-green eyes the small freckles beside her nose standing out from her pale skin. She didn't daub on the powder like the most of them. That was one thing to be said in her favor. And he didn't think, either, that those thin red lips of hers came off of any lip-stick.

"All right," she said, letting his eyes go at last and turning now to Monahan. "That's fixed. Now, then," she asked, "what's his name? You haven't told me that yet."

"John Kane," said the name's owner, when the other man did not reply at once.

"All right," said Monahan to him. "But you didn't have to tell her."

"I'm not afraid," said Kane.

And yet he thought—now her eyes were off his—that maybe it might have been a mistake at that.

"Now," said the girl to Monahan again, "now that's settled, can I speak to him private?"

"Surest thing you know!" said Monahan, after a look at her. And showed them the anteroom where she could do so.

"When you get it all fixed up, call me," he told them.

THEY stood and then sat facing each other in the border of that tiny side-room—the untried young cop and this woman of the good thieves, the sister of this condemned murderer—natural enemies, thrown together in their strange enterprise by one of the crazy chances which govern the wild, abnormal daily life of the underworld.

"Now, listen," said the girl promptly, "let's get in right to start with—so there'll be no mistakes."

"That's right," assented Kane, watching her, sizing her up—as all men do all women always.

"This is business, not pleasure—we're in together."

"Right!"

"You get out of it a chance to make a reputation for yourself—your first month on the force. You get that," she told him, with a steady look into his eyes and a wait, "and that's all."

"That's enough for me," said Kane, getting her meaning of course, and giving her her steady look back again.

She went at it right; you could say that for her. No false modesty. But just plain, straight notice where he stood. But he watched her just the same—judging her, as all men judge all women always. After all, whatever his first instincts might have told him what she was, he knew just one thing sure about her—the kind of cattle she had been brought up with. They were traditional enemies.

"And I get my brother's life," she went on.

"If we win out," he cautioned her.

"We'll win!" said the girl. "We've got to!"

He liked one thing about her on the start. She had nerve. You could see that the first look. They had that, of course, a good many of these women of the thieves—the courage of the devil.

She went on then, right off, to wise him up on her part in their plant—about this Scar Henry, this big crook from Colorado—this old side-partner of her brother's in the West that she was giving herself out now to be living with.

"That was all right—what he was giving you in there," she told Kane. Only this: I not only never lived with him—or any other man. I never saw him. I was out there—but I never saw this man."

"I get you," said Kane, watching her, seeing her come back to that point again.

And then she went on:

"I'm telling you this, not only so you'll have the right dope on me—but on the rest of them at the same time. They'll all think different—you want to understand that—even this Vida Vernon I've been telling you about—this Greek's woman." And then she went on and gave him his instructions about their handling her. "She's in to help up to that point. She's scared solid he's going to croak her—as soon as The's light goes out. She'll work her head off so long as she thinks you're in the game—that you're this Scar Henry. But she'd turn inside out if she knew what you really were—lose her grip entirely. She's soft as mashed potatoes," she told him scornfully.

Then, after putting him wise on her, she went on and explained the layout of the flat—the two bedrooms next to each other, and their two windows and the fire-escape. And the idea of the Greek's woman of getting him to spill himself nights, with the window open a little, and they listening from the fire-escape; and then the next idea of that Vida Vernon, that when they got their ear full and got the story of the frame-up on this man—the brother of the Carney girl—and the old side-partner of this Henry—that Kane, or Henry, as the woman would think, would break in and beat up the Greek until he came through and promised to go right off with them to the police or the district attorney and cough the whole thing up.

"How bad is he?" Kane asked her. "How much of a battle would he put up?"

"He's not so easy at that," she told him, "for a black man. It depends some on the effect of the hootch he's drinking all the time. But a battle won't be necessary—will it?—not the way Vida thinks. For we'll be following out a different program as I get it. You'll get the information, and they're going to wait—the other dicks—watch from the outside—while we work inside. And then they'll try and round up Blaney and the Greek together.themselves—probably at the Hectic Club dance—if not before," she said, stopping, getting nervous, thinking of her brother probably, Kane thought, and how little time there was left to save him.

"All right," said Kane, going on to plan it out with her. For he saw she was bright—right there always with the head-work. "But suppose we didn't get in there—or shut out from the window somehow, and we didn't get the dope that way. What then? Could we go after him, anyway—talk to him direct or something?"

"Not on your hope of heaven," she told him. "He'd hop over South America the first jump—if he thought we knew anything."

"How would we get it, then?" Kane asked her.

"We'll get it some way. The main thing is to get started," she told him.

"What about one of those dictographs, they're running in so much everywhere," he asked her. "Working from his room to ours?"

But she warned him off of that.

"That's old stuff," she told him. "We'd be done if either one of them got it. And she'd almost have to. I'll get the dope to you all right. We don't need to take any such chances."

AND then they went along and worked out how they'd act, especially Kane, so as not to be with this Greek where he could look him over more than he had to.

"We can get through one day," she told him, "by saying you're down and out from dodging the police. We can say you're all in and leave you in bed."

John Kane smiled. She certainly had a head on her—you could see that.

"And then again," she was telling him, "he's not too friendly with anybody—at first—till he's got their measure. And especially when he's drinking—the way he is now. It always makes him leery of everybody—Vida included. And now, of course, he's leery, anyhow. And then, besides that, he'll be away a lot the next few days. He's on the committee of the Hectic Club ball next Monday. And I know he's out pretending to be working on my brother's case. He won't bother you much. And we might turn it off the very first night," she told him, "before he even gets a look at you."

"We might," said Kane. "But we can't count on that. As I get it, we're going to stay there till they pull us out—maybe clear through to going to the ball next Monday night."

"Well, anyhow, that's about as far as we can go now, isn't it?" she told him finally. "Till we get in there together."

And he thought she was right. They had gone over the thing up and down, backward and forward, as far as they could figure it. They got to talking more or less easy, feeling freer with each other. But now, at the end, she stiffened up again.

"Now, then," she said, going back to where she started out from, "we understand each other about that other thing?"

"What other thing?" asked Kane, not getting her for the minute.

"You might not believe it, but I'm straight."

"I haven't doubted it, have I?" said Kane, his voice hardening again.

"Well, that's understood. I didn't know," she went on, her voice increasing its hardness after his did, "knowing what's in this for me—my brother's life and all that—but you might think you had me cold. But don't start in with that idea, because there's nothing in it."

"I won't. Don't worry," he told her.

"Because, after all," she said, "you've got to remember it's a stand-off between us. If you've got my brother's life in your fingers, all I've got to do to get yours, any hour of the day, is just bawl you out to the gang that will be round you. Not that I'd do that, either," she said, giving him a look. "Not while I've got a gun of my own."

"You don't have to threaten me," said Kane, holding himself back—but with a touch of scorn in his own voice just the same. "I was brought up decent."

"I just wanted to tell you—that's all—at the start-off," she said to him, giving him another look with those hard eyes. She was a handsome devil. If she'd been a man, she'd have been a bad one to handle—he could see that.

So they fixed it up, where he'd meet her that night, after she had made the arrangement with the other two.

"Do you want to be there and hear me telephoning?" she asked him, "so as to see I'm working on the level?"

"No," he told her. "I'll take my chance with you. I'll have to, anyway. It's just as you said here a minute ago. It's a stand-off between us. I'll have his life, in a way. And you'll have mine. I guess we'll play straight."

"I guess we will," she told him.

And from there, after she was gone, John Kane got his final instructions from the chief, who started in telling him what they had on this Slip Blaney.

"For that's the boy I'm sending you out after," he told him. "I've got to get Blaney if we're going to keep running a detective bureau in this town. It's whether decent men run it or the crooks, that's all," he said, and then went on and gave John Kane his instructions: How he'd listen in nights, and how each night at two o'clock he was to drop a message out the window into the back court of the flat—for he couldn't telephone with any safety at either end of the line. And how he'd go right on through to the dance on Monday night, if the thing didn't break any sooner—for they couldn't get any word to him probably until it did break. But all the time, of course, he would have other men trailing both the Greek and Blaney to see if they could nail them together. And then he warned him against the crowd he was getting into in general, and the girl in particular. "For they're all alike," he said, "crawling poison snakes. Now go on," he said finally. "Beat it out and get that scar painted on your face. And get ready to go."

IT WAS a Friday night. The dance was on Monday, and The Carney's day was set for Wednesday—in the early morning. John Kane, with his little old hand-bag and the roll of money they had staked him for in the department, came out at nine o'clock; and when he had met the girl in front of the drug store, as they had agreed, she took him up to this flat of the Greek's.

The Greek was out when they got there, but his woman was waiting—this Vida Vernon, one of those soft, washed blondes, full of her airs and graces—nervous, probably, over what was coming.

"Where's Joe?" Flame asked her.

"He's out late to-night," the other one told her. "He said he was sorry, but you'd have to excuse him this time. He's on the committee for the club dance Monday and a dozen other things. He's running his head off lately."

"I know that," said Flame.

And the two of them went into their room and left their things there and came out again into the living-room. They sat there and talked—in one of those little gaudy flats the thieves fix up for themselves when they're in funds. And finally Kane started acting dead from sleep—the way the girl had told him to.

"Well, I guess it was time you were hitting the hay, Scar," she said, looking over at him—and then at the blond girl. "I told you how it was," she explained. "He's been out ninety-six hours without any sleep."

That was the high sign for him to go off and leave them alone, so they could talk together. Kane got up.

"If it's all the same to you," he said.

"Sure!" said the Carney girl. "You toddle along in, Scar. We'll sit out here and buzz a while."

So she sat out there working the Vernon girl, getting the lay of the land.

"You know where he is," Vida Vernon told her about the Greek. "He's out talking this all over with Blaney. He won't walk across the street without going into conference with him now."

"Won't we get a chance to hear you get him talking to-night? We've only got three nights, remember," the Carney girl told her, "not counting in that night of the dance."

"I'll do what I can. That's all I can do."

They sat there talking a couple of hours or so, but finally, round midnight somewhere, the Carney girl came into the bedroom, where Kane was sitting in the dark, waiting for her.

"He's coming now pretty quick," she told him. "He just telephoned."

"I heard it," said Kane, talking low, like she did.

And then, after a little while, they put out the light and fixed the window out on the fire-escape and sat there near the window, waiting.

PRESENTLY the Greek came in, and he and Vida went into their own room. You could hear them talking low—first the man's voice growling, and then the light voice of the woman. And finally the Greek went to bed, and the woman evidently came and put up the shade and raised the window up a little and went to bed herself.

Kane was out on the fire-escape, listening. It didn't reach quite over to the other window, but near enough so he could hear their voices.

They were talking about Blaney—he got that—and the Greek's visit to him that night; and it was just as his woman had said—the two of them, he and Blaney, were jumping shadows about this time, leery of everything that moved. And, of course, that included Kane.

Joe had been hitting the hootch. You could tell by his voice he was jumpy.

"Say," he asked her, all of a sudden; "is that window open to-night?"

"Like it always is."

"Go and shut it, then."

"I'll die with the heat if I do."

"Shut it first, and die afterward," he told her. "I'm not taking any chances of talking anywhere where anybody can listen in anywhere."

She had to do it finally. And finally Kane had to crawl back to where the Carney girl was and tell her it was done—he couldn't hear any more.

"What'll we do?" she asked him, whispering, all excited.

"I don't know," said Kane, steadying her. "We'll work up something."

And after the first minute or two—when she got over her first disappointment—she was all right.

But it was going to be a tough nut to crack; Kane could see that. He was glad he had that new telephone thing in his pocket—an arrangement that Monahan had given him instead of a dictograph. But he didn't speak to her about it yet—on account of her opposing the dictograph idea so strongly.

But by and by they heard the voices stop in the other room, and they knew it was no use for them to stay awake any longer.

"You'd better go over to your side of the room," he told her, for they had agreed beforehand to kind of split up the room between them, each one to have his side. "You'd better turn in," he said, "and get some sleep."

And after a while she said she would, and she went over and lay down on the bed—in some sort of a loose gown she had put on when she first came in. He could see her just dimly, his eyes having got used to the dark room. And he could see her reach in and put something under her pillow—an automatic pistol, he thought it might be—and thought what Mohahan had said about watching her always, and after that some more!

Then, at two o'clock, he went and dropped out one of the little pebbles he had brought in for the purpose into the court with the piece of paper wrapped round it, for Monahan. He had written on it:

Out with B. to-night. No other news.

Looking out, Kane thought he saw a figure coming out of the shadows, three stories underneath, and picking it up. Then he went back and lay down in the corner, on a blanket and one of the pillows which she had fixed up for him on the floor.

John Kane didn't sleep. He was thinking, naturally, of what he could do—whether there was any chance of pulling this thing off, especially in the time she would have to do it in now—to get her information for him to give the department, and save her brother.

He was kind of sorry for her. She might be a thief's woman, brought up in a bad bunch, but she was a sticker, and game from head to toe—you could say that for her. And it was a hard thing for any woman to be going through—an awful strain, say what you wanted about how wild these women were, and how they lived on excitement and danger.

Kane lay still while he was going over this in his head, but his eyes were open all the time—for he was thinking. He looked over to the bed, where the girl was, and she was lying awake, too, he made up his mind, though she didn't move a particle.

But finally he saw her raise herself up, an inch at a time, looking over, it seemed like, to where he was. He didn't say anything, but just lay there, waiting. And by and by he saw her reach under the pillow—where her automatic was.

And then he almost had to laugh out loud—for he saw what she was doing. She was sitting there, telling her beads, praying for her brother, probably. She had had her rosary under her pillow. It was a queer thing, too—when he thought of it—that thief's woman sitting there in the dark, praying.

But a policeman sees a good many things you wouldn't believe could happen. John Kane, after watching her a minute, eased his head back, crossed himself, said his own prayers and went to sleep—as much as he could there on the floor.

THE next day was the one that they had it framed up that Kane—or this Scar Henry, as he made himself out to be—was to lie abed, all in from chasing round, dodging the police those last four or five days. And they knew now, of course, that the Greek wouldn't butt in—not wanting to see him, for reasons of his own, until he had to. So the Carney girl went out and got Kane's breakfast and brought it back to him.

"He's gone already," she told him, "after leaving word for us that he was sorry but he couldn't help it. He had to go out of town—up to Albany, maybe—to see the politicians on the stay for The. What's really going on is he's stalling, waiting until he hears from Blaney just how he's got to act. He's been drinking so—this wild poison stuff you get now—that Blaney's keeping his hand right on him all the time, for fear he might go stony-eyed and spill the whole thing."

She was getting pretty nervous herself—Kane could see that—over the way the thing was going.

"What'll we do?" she asked him, her face getting flushed. "Supposing he don't come back here? Have we run into a rat-trap where we can't get out? This leaves us only two nights more."

"We'll work something for you," said Kane. He was getting good and sorry for the girl—whatever she might be. It was too much to put any woman through. "We'll keep on going from here. The next thing's clear enough."

"What's that?"

"His being out of here. We can use that

time just as well as he can. You take her out"—referring to the Vernon woman—"and I'll take a look around."

"Be careful now," she told him, getting ready to go. "Don't leave any traces behind you. Don't forget you're dealing with a scared dago murderer—something more sensitive than a burned baby."

He hadn't told her about that telephone thing of his—remembering what she said about the dictograph—thinking he'd put it in first and tell her afterward. And this would give him his chance to put it in.

He went all over the place first—and there was nothing incriminating that he could find. He had hardly expected that there would be. And then he went into that gaudy bedroom of the Greek and looked round to see where he would set up this little telephone—this instrument for listening in.

There was a woman's dresser on the wall next to their room, one of those fancy ones with a big, swinging oval mirror. And Kane, hurrying all the time for fear they might walk in on him, took out his little bit and got through the base-board, and ran a wire up in back of the dresser and put the little receiver in there, just below where the mirror would swing back. You could barely see the thing, and the wire was colored so you'd hardly notice it. But in his hurry he made a rough job of it.

He cleaned everything up, so far as he could see, and got back in his own room and on his bed there, lying with all his clothes on but coat and shoes, ready to duck in under when the women came. But they did not come.

He got up after a while and shaved himself, and while doing this he was more or less worried about that scar they had painted on his face. It was there all right—as they told him it would be. But it looked to him as if it might have faded out just a little. He wished it wasn't there. He had to take all kinds of pains with his shaving—not to get it wet or rub it. They said it would stand some wet and any ordinary rubbing it might get—but you didn't want to be too reckless about handling it, especially when you knew it couldn't be put on again if it ever did go wrong.

After he shaved, he lay down again on the bed, listening for the girls to come back. But they didn't show up for quite some time. And, naturally, he got to thinking of that girl he was with.

There might be some excuse for her—being hauled into that life by her brother—you couldn't tell. And she might use her automatic at that, if anybody bothered her—for he certainly thought, in spite of what Monahan had said, that the girl was all right.

"She certainly acted so up to now," he said to himself, and dropped off to sleep for a minute before they came back—for he hadn't slept any too much that night before.

"What'd you get—anything?" Flame asked him, standing before the mirror, putting her hair in order. Kane, watching her, thought he'd never seen such hair in his life—or a straighter, finer-looking girl.

"Nothing much," he said, not telling her yet what he'd done. "Did you get anything out of her?"

"No," she told him; "except that the Greek's pretty sure to be back here late to-night."

"That's something," said Kane.

"But what will we do then," she asked him, "if that window's closed again?"

"Is she going to try to keep it open?"

"If she can—yes. But can she?"

"Well—we'll work it out some way," he told her. "But I'm sorry now I didn't hang onto that first idea I had about sneaking in a dictograph," he went on—not telling her yet what he'd done, but getting her ready, thinking the more anxious she was—the more she thought she was in a hole—the more satisfied she would be when she found he had pulled her out of it by this thing he'd put in there—even if she had thought it would be taking too many chances.

He got up and ate lunch with them—stuff out of the delicatessen shop, of course. And then went back in and lay down again, saying he could stand some sleep, which was no lie. He tested out his telephone instrument once, when the two women were in the other bedroom. And it worked fine. You could hear a pin drop. And then he rolled over and took a good long sleep till they got him up for dinner.

THEY played cards that night—women's poker. He had a chance to practise on the Greek's woman how he'd act when the Greek finally showed up. There was one thing he made up his mind he'd work

Being a big thief, like that Scar Henry, feeling ugly after what he'd gone through, he didn't have to put himself out much for anybody else—or do much talking. If he wanted to shut up, he could play the grouch and get away with it. And when the Greek didn't come toward eleven o'clock, Kane told them he was going to call it a day, and went back and got his listening-machine all ready for him when he did show up.

"The next train from Albany," the Greek's woman had told them before he went into the room, "is just before midnight. So probably he'll think he'll come in right after that."

And then the two women decided they wouldn't wait for him, and then Flame Carney came into Kane's room, where he was dickering with that instrument.

"What's this?" she asked him, a sharp tone coming into her voice.

And then he told her at last.

"Where'd you put it?"

And he told her that, too.

"In back of her dresser?" she said in a still sharper voice.

"Yes. Why?"

"You might have asked me—that's all," she said, "before you did a thing like that."

"Why—what's the matter with that place?"

"Oh nothing—only it's about the worst place you could have picked out."

"Why?" he asked her again. And she told him what she was afraid of.

"She's got a place there—fixed on the back of that dresser—where she hides what she doesn't want him to get wise to, where she puts her own bank-roll and all that—a kind of cloth pocket she's tacked on. She's always into that, or looking to see if it's all right. It's a wonder you didn't see that yourself. Well, it's done, anyhow. It may end in murder—but it might go through all right. We'll hope so, anyhow," she told him. That was one thing you could say of her. When a thing was done, she made the most of it.

"It's good," she said, when he had her listen in. "There'll be nothing get away from us while it's up there—you can say that."

So they sat in there listening, waiting; and finally, after midnight, the Greek did come in—ugly from his hootch, as usual.

"What did you find out?" John Kane, with his ear glued to the telephone, heard his woman ask him.

"About what?" he asked back, evidently ugly.

"What does Blaney say about him—this Henry?"

"He ain't satisfied yet. He's looking him up through the wireless out in Chi. That's where they all claim he was dug in at last accounts."

"You're off your head," said the Vernon woman. "Flame Carney'd be likely to be doubling up—dragging somebody in here she didn't know. That would be real probable, wouldn't it?"

And he seemed to agree to that.

"But that's all right. Suppose he is—just what he claims to be," he said then. "And we happen to drop a word—you, especially—that would give him a line on how things really stand with The."

"Or you, more likely," she told him. "When you're loaded to the gills with this varnish you're drinking now.

"Or suppose that The had got an idea somewhere that I had double-crossed him—and sent the both of them in here—to listen in some way and find out."

"You're jumping the moon—that's what's the matter with you," said the girl back. "What will you think of next?"

THE telephone was working fine. They got fighting again then about opening the window. And he wouldn't let her open it. But she kept him on just the same—talking along that line they started on, working out his suspicion that at the last minute Carney might get wise to what they were doing—how they were foxing him about what the governor was going to do; and he might cough up the real dope on the murder that he'd been holding back all this time—at the last minute.

"What harm would that do now?" the Vernon woman was asking him. "Nobody would believe it at this late day—after the defense they put up, swearing the bulls shot him. They'd have a swell chance to make anybody believe the real dope now."

"That's all right," the Greek told her. "You never can tell. There's always a slip in these things when you least expect it. But if there was—if there was any frame-up in this—and you let her in on me, working your friendship, believe me, you can count on one thing: I'd croak you first before anybody else. I'd make sure of one. So put that down on the slate and keep watching!"

He was talking rough, without a doubt—half drunk, trying to scare her. But you could hear her voice change—the fear in it—when he told her. She was soft stuff—Kane could get that even through the telephone. Some different from the girl who sat there beside him in the dark while he listened, still as an image, never moving to disturb him—though she must be half crazy to know the stuff he was getting through that receiver.

"What was it?" she asked finally, when the two shut off talking.

"Flash up that little flash-light," he whispered back to her, and he looked at his watch. It was almost two o'clock already.

So he scrawled out his message to Monahan on the paper—and showed it to her.

Her story O. K. C. innocent. B. and A. together all day. Nail them.

"I heard enough for that," he whispered to her—and saw her face go red from white, even in the dim outside edge of the light from that flash-light.

"Now flash it out," he told her—and they were in the dark again.

And he went over and dropped the paper out, and saw it lying there at the mouth of the court—a little spot of white—till the shadow stole out again from the corner and grabbed it up. Then he went back and sat down and told her all about what he had been hearing. And after he was through, she didn't say anything for a while. And then, all at once, she spoke up in a low voice, kind of hoarse.

"I want to shake hands," she said. And she reached out her hand and missed his a little in the dark, and finally shook it as a man would.

"For why?" asked John Kane, a little fussed.

"For what you wrote about my brother," she said in a still hoarser voice, and let his hand go.

"Oh, that's all right," he told her, not thinking of anything else to say.

And then they both were still a minute—till Kane spoke up again.

"You go to bed, girl," he said. "Lie down and get some rest. You'll need it."

He had no sooner said it than he caught himself up.

"This won't do," he said to himself, after she had gone across the room and he had lain down in the corner she had fixed up for him. "The next thing you know," he said to himself, "you'll be falling for her!"

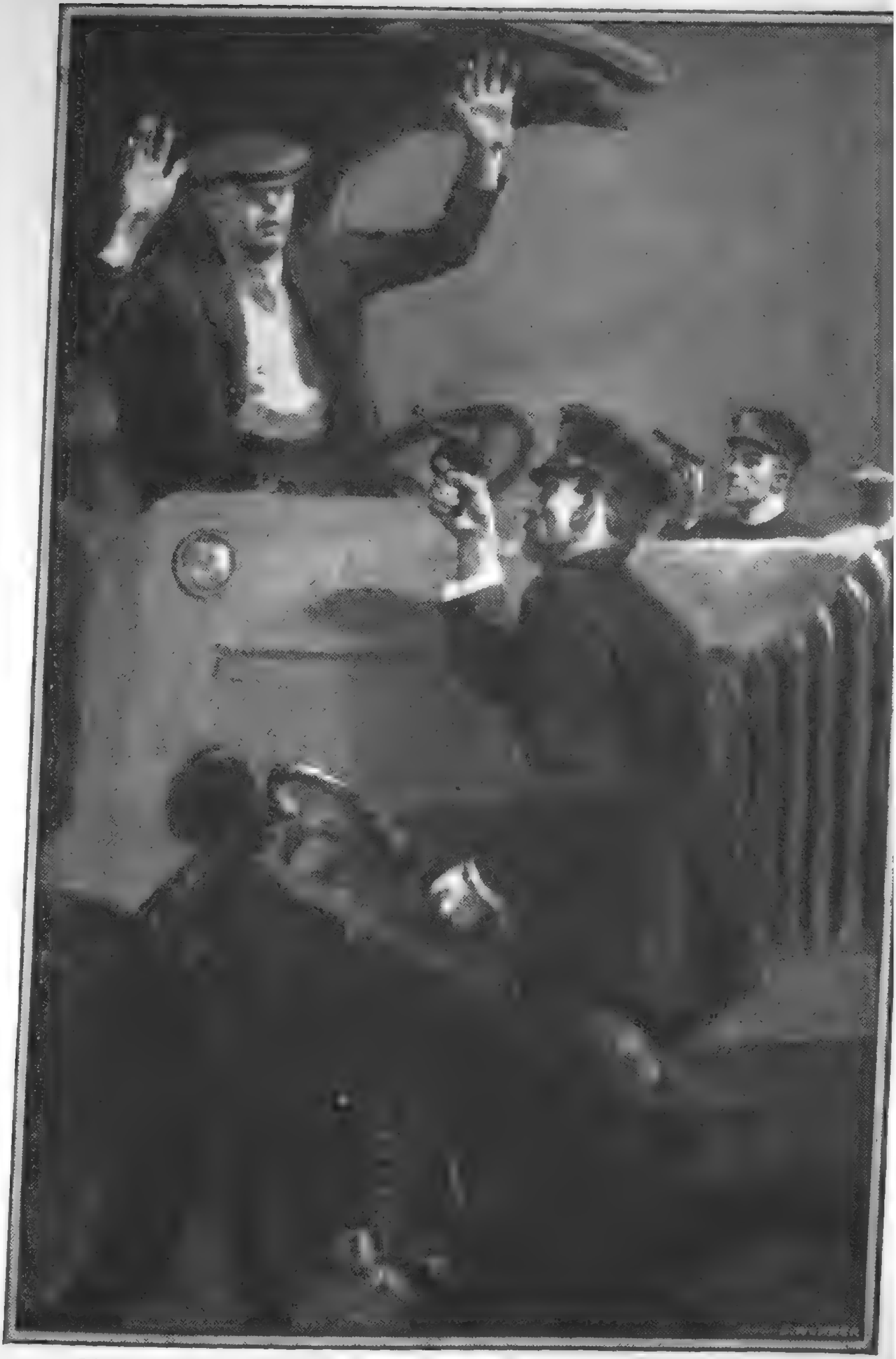
He lay awake there, thinking what a wild thing it was—he, a cop, and she in that thieves' gang—shut up here together, getting naturally closer and closer together in this thing—this plant they were working out—and after two or three days more separated forever, most probably bitter enemies. He lay there till he saw her telling over her beads again in the dark, and after that he got to sleep once more.

THAT was the second night. And going over it on waking up, Kane felt fairly well satisfied. Of course, naturally, it would have been more satisfactory if he could have heard from headquarters what they were doing shadowing Blaney, but, as it was, all there was to do was to stick and keep on boring in here till they called him off.

He was wondering now whether or not he ought to show himself and give the Greek a chance to see him if he wanted to. Whether he wouldn't think it was queer if he always kept out of sight. And he decided—he and the girl together—that he'd better come out. And so he did. He went out to have some coffee and rolls they had for breakfast, along between nine and ten o'clock, when they got up.

Then, after him a while, the Greek came out—a dark, medium-sized man, dressed up a little gaudy, the way those foreigners are, with a couple of rings and a diamond scarf-pin, and one of those corset-shaped coats with high waists—and that long, straight nose he got his name from. John Kane had heard them speak in one place and another praising up Greek faces and figures, but he made up his mind that a nose like that looked better on a statue than it did on a crook in a short-waisted coat.

He shook hands with Kane in a rough and hearty way, like a prize-fighter, and started in talking to the Carney girl, apologizing for being so busy—looking after the case of her brother and with the trip he said he had made the day before to Albany to be good and sure everything was all right.



The detective reached the truck just as the two men on motor-cycles were dismounting, keeping the driver's hands up.

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"I know just how you're feeling, Flame," he told her. "I would be myself. But don't fret. Rest easy. I know. I tell you now I've got through to the biggest there are in politics in this state, and they've been on through to the governor. And I know. He's coming through with a commutation of sentence—sure. It may be out on Monday, and it may be he'll hold it over till the last day, Tuesday. But, one day or the other, it will come off."

The girl didn't say anything—or show anything in her face. Just said, "Thank you, Joe," and sat there studying him—doing her stunt at acting just the same as he did. And the thought came to John Kane watching them: How'd you like to live in a world like this, where everybody's watching each other day and night—to stop getting the double cross or the knife in the back any hour? He could see the Greek studying him out of the corners of his eyes. The man was going on now, telling the girl about the dance Monday night.

"You can come out now," he said, "and be easy while you're dancing. They'll all expect you. They're going to pull off a little something for The, and they'll look for you to be there."

"I'd be there, anyhow," she said, throwing up her head that way she had—her face flushing up and her eyes hard again. "Just to show them."

"Sure!" said Vida Vernon, coming in. "As the fellow said—if the guys can die cracking safes for us, we can die dancing with them."

And then the Greek turned to Kane—made a crack at him about coming to the dance, too.

"Why not?" he said, when Kane did not know. "You'd be as safe there as you are here—safer. You can tell him how it is, Flame. We've always had the dicks fixed so they don't butt in on that ball. They know better. They have their orders."

"How'll it be about this?" asked Kane, still objecting. "All the clothes I've got is just what I've got on?"

"Oh, that'll be all right," said the Greek. "There'll be plenty of others there like that."

"Well, I might go at that," said Kane finally. "I'd like to take the girl here," he said. "I would, without thinking, if it wasn't for this here"—meaning his scar.

He hadn't called attention to it before; he thought maybe he ought not to have.

"Ah, forget it! You'll be safe enough, I'll guarantee that," the Greek told him. But Kane could see him looking him over still, studying him out of the corners of his eyes—especially that scar, or so Kane thought.

THAT scar worried Kane most of the time now, and when the Greek pulled out he thought he'd take the girl into their room and ask her to look over it. It wasn't long before the Greek went.

"I don't want to take my hands off a minute, you see, for The's sake," he said, looking at Flame and then over at John Kane. "And Sunday's the great day for the pols—when you can get them altogether. So you see I'm quite a busy guy to-day—and I guess probably you'll excuse me."

"Out for the day with Blaney," said Vida Vernon, after he was down-stairs.

She didn't know about the telephone stunt into her room, of course—that they had listened in that night before. And she was sore and excited about the Greek's making her keep the window down again.

"Honest to God, I tried all I had in me to stop it," she told them.

"It's the last night—you want to remember," said Flame Carney, pretending to be excited and probably feeling so, too—always when she thought of the small amount of time she had.

"I'll have the thing open to-night," said the Vernon girl, after going over what the Greek had told her the night before about everything, "or die in the attempt. But if I don't, you go out in the living-room and listen in at that door. He'll have some news for you to-night. He's going to get what Blaney's dug up about you to-day," she said to the supposed Scar Henry. "He'll be full of that when he gets back—and of hootch, too, probably. And he'll talk his arm off to me—about everything. And, after that, to-morrow—if not to-night—you can jump in and confront him with what you heard him say, and you can beat it out of him and drag him over to the police or the district attorney's office. He's a rat at heart, and he's worse now—almost on the verge of tears."

"Will you stick—when we get him up there?" Flame Carney asked her.

"Stick? Why not? Sure I will!" she said. "I've got to, haven't I? It's like I told you. It hasn't changed any. I can't take the chance of letting The's light get blown out and sitting here—waiting—next in line. I'll come through," she promised them. But yet her eyes wavered—the way that kind's do—when she said it.

And then Kane went back into his room and left the two girls alone again, knowing that Flame could pump her better when he wasn't there.

There was another long day—that second one—that Sunday. They ate a lunch of delicatessen stuff along between one and two, and the girls played double Canfield while he went through the Sunday papers. And they read over together what it had to say about The's execution, and a little item down in the corner from Chicago about their hunting for Scar Henry, the big thief out there. And then, after that, they decided all parties would take a nap, and he went in with the Carney girl into their room again, and they sat there looking out the window—and got talking they way you do, passing away the time.

She acted different—since she had seen that note he sent out that night before, saying her brother was innocent—friendlier, more grateful, not so hard—with a look in her eyes as if she didn't hate him. And finally he got her to telling him about her people down there in the old Seventh Ward. Her mother had died, it seemed, when she was a kid.

"And that makes a great difference to a kid—girl or boy," said Kane, looking over at her.

"You bet your life it does!" she said, looking out the window.

And then he told her about his mother—and all she'd done for him, raising him up after his father was killed that time.

"But a mother means more to you, I'll say," she told him after listening, "than a father."

And she went on and told him about her old man. In the trucking business, down there for years—and did pretty well till he got drinking after the wife died.

"You know how it is in that business, or was, anyhow—in and out the saloons," she told him.

It surprised him in a way, listening to her talk—how many things they had in common with each other after all. And then she went on from there and told him about that brother, The—how he started out in a garage, making good right along until one time he thought the man at the head of it framed him, and he smashed him and got through. And then how, being out of work and sore, he got into that silk-robbery game—that lies just round the corner, as everybody knows, from the business he was in and his father was in before him.

"They're always hanging round trying out the men in the trucking business—you know that," she told him.

"Sure!" he said—and they stopped talking, looking out the window.

"You can't tell—what will happen to you, can you?" she asked him after a while, with a little kind of a sigh.

"You sure can't!" he told her.

THEN they sat still some more, looking out the window, both thinking. It was Sunday, of course and the men were home, ugly from nothing to do. You could hear their voices jawing with the women, and now and then one smashing a kid, and the kid hollering. But it was quieter than most flats at that—having more of these thieves and just their women.

But all at once, unexpectedly, the girl beside Kane broke out in a kind of hoarse, rebellious voice—as if she were choking.

"God! How I hate it! How I hate it!" she cried. "Why did I have to have all this," she said, "wished onto me? Why have I had to fight, fight, all my life? Just to be plain decent!"

He looked at her—not knowing what to say. She wasn't crying any—just looking out across the court with hard, dry eyes.

"I'm not so much," she said. "I know that. I came along with The, staying with him still when he went bad. I didn't quit him. I stayed and took that money. Oh, I'm no saint! But I'm not that other thing. Not like the rest of these women. Maybe I'm too wise," she said, with a hard laugh, "after seeing the way the most of them go afterward." She stopped and thought it over. "I should have quit The, I suppose," she said. "And yet—well, I didn't; that's all."

"I guess probably you're not much of a quitter," said Kane, helping her out.

"I don't know," she said; "maybe. And

then I hoped, maybe, sometime I might get him to quit himself. But I'm not apologizing or excusing myself, either," she told him in a kind of bitter voice. "I'm not so much. And after this—here, with you," she went on, "I don't know what will happen to me. I've got the name now, anyhow. And probably," she said, her voice getting harder and harder now, "I'll have the game before I'm through—especially if The—" she said, her voice breaking.

"Don't worry," Kane started telling her, finding the place where he thought he could speak finally. "The least the governor can do now is——"

She wasn't listening to him, but went on like a person talking to himself.

"Not that I grudge it to The," she said, throwing up her head that independent way she had. "I'd be a nice thing if I didn't come across with The—to the limit."

"You're good, I'll say," said John Kane, reaching over and patting her hand in a kind of awkward way, not knowing exactly what his cue was in the circumstances. She drew her hand quickly away.

"Don't get the idea I'm whining—or condemning The, either. Only, I always wish all this hadn't happened. That he'd never got going in this direction."

"I get you," said Kane, his hand back on his own chair-arm.

And they were still again—till she got herself under good control once more and started off talking over their plans. And then Kane brought up that thing about that scar on his face that had been troubling him.

"Does it look faded out any?"

"I don't know. I don't think so—maybe just a little."

"It's got me worried some," he told her.

"Wait," she said, and went over to a drawer in the bureau and came back with one of those lip-sticks, and he stood still while she touched one or two places with it, just faintly.

"There!" she said, standing off looking at it—talking brighter and brisker. "That's all right. We're lucky to have it. First aid to the injured."

She was giving him a very different look now from what she did at first—not so hard, a look of confidence and gratitude that she hadn't had on her face before. And she smiled a little, but he didn't smile back this time at once.

"Say—look!" he said to her, after a minute. "You don't use one of those things, do you?"

"What things?"

"Those lip-sticks."

"No," she said; "I just found it there in the drawer. Why?"

"You look better without it. They all do."

It made him smile himself, thinking it over afterward. You'd think, to hear him, he owned her. And another funny thing, too, he noticed—she took it from him just as he gave it—with no come-back at all.

It was all a queer thing, anyhow, John Kane thought to himself—how he had got there in with this girl and was getting acquainted the way they were—and then, in a week's time, probably he'd never see her again. And yet he didn't know at that. He felt better acquainted with her already than any woman he'd ever seen in his life. In spite of what Monahan had told him about these women being all alike, he knew this one was straight through and through every way. If she wasn't—if he couldn't trust her—then he never wanted to see another woman again.

They went all over the thing they were working together—sitting up rather close, talking low, so that the Vernon girl couldn't get on to what they were saying if she happened to think she'd like to listen in. And that girl—that Flame Carney—had more sense and quick wit about her than any woman Kane had ever run against.

They went over that Vernon girl's part in the thing, and what they could expect of her, and the chance of her finding that telephone arrangement on the wall back of her dresser. They figured they would probably be taking about as much of a chance trying to get it out now as they would be in leaving it, and they'd lose the other chance of getting more dope that night through it.

THE Greek came home late again, and the three of them went to their rooms without waiting for him.

"Listen, girl!" said John Kane to this Flame Carney. He had got calling her that all the time since they got talking to each other that afternoon about their lives and their people. "You can't tell when he'll be along. Why not put out the light, and you go and lie down—and try to sleep?" And finally he got her to do it.

She must have been pretty well in, for in a few minutes, listening to her breathing, he could hear she was asleep. He sat there thinking and waiting, and all at once the girl started struggling and whimpering and crying out in her sleep; and in a second or two he saw what it was. She was in a bad dream—a nightmare—carrying along, probably, her troubles out of the daytime.

John Kane spoke to her once or twice—more or less in a low voice—but she paid no attention to him, kept struggling, making those hard, distressing noises you make in a nightmare—as if you were just going to die. And finally Kane couldn't stand it, and he stepped over, not thinking, into her side of the room. He stood by the further side of the bed and put his hand on her shoulder, trying to wake her up.

Right away she was sitting up and had that gun of hers under his nose. He thought she'd shoot him sure before she got awake.

"What's this?" she asked him.

He stood still, letting her wake up—not moving for fear she'd let him have it.

"And I trusted you," she said, "like a fool!"

"You got me wrong," said Kane. "You were crying out—waking up the whole neighborhood. You had the nightmare."

By that time she had the light of her pocket flash-light in his face, watching.

"Well, get over," she told him, half convinced he wasn't lying to her, "to your own side of the room. I'm awake now, anyhow."

And John Kane went back and sat there in the dark, thinking, more or less sore, and yet realizing, after all, how natural it all was from her standpoint.

After a bit the girl got up and came over and sat by John Kane, not saying anything about what she had said to him before—but apologizing, in a way, by just coming. And they sat there waiting, and finally the Greek came bumping in again after midnight.

He was seeing red lights—drunker than he had been yet. John Kane, with his ear on the little receiver, could hear that just as soon as he started talking. He began speaking low and hoarse and ugly the minute the door of his bedroom went closed behind him—cursing her out, abusing her—but not coming to the real thing till the Vernon woman worked it out of him.

"What's struck you?" she said to him after a while.

"You know what Blaney got through from Chicago to-night?"

"No," she said.

She was sitting now, John Kane could hear, in front of that dresser of hers. Fixing her hair probably, keeping her courage up—and maybe watching the Greek in the mirror.

"Scar Henry!" said the Greek, his voice sinking down like a threatening dog's just before he jumps.

"What about him?"

"He's still out there—in Chicago."

"In Chicago?" said the woman's sharp voice.

"Yes—and you know it!" the Greek told her.

"No. I don't—I don't—I don't!" she answered him—the way women and children do when a man's got hold of them, hurting them.

"What is this—a plant?" the Greek asked her in his hoarse drinking-voice. "Because if it is, I'll croak the three of you."

And then John Kane heard the woman give a sudden cry and there was a kind of a bang—and just then the telephone stopped working.

FOR a second Kane sat there, surprised—the way you do when the telephone goes dead on you. He wasn't sure at first just what it all meant—whether the Greek had shoved her, the way a drunk does, and banged that dresser up against the instrument on the wall there and broken it, or whether one of them had seen the instrument suddenly and done something to it.

"What is it?" the girl back of him was whispering.

"It's gone dead," he whispered back. "I don't know just what has happened."

"The!" she said out loud—showing in that word what was always in her mind first.

"Don't get excited," said John Kane. "It's all right, probably."

And then they stopped and listened again.

John Kane didn't know just what to do. If they'd found that instrument, there might be a battle right off now—any time—with the Greek lit up the way he was now.

On the other hand, if he was slamming this woman of his, he might get busy and kill her before they broke in on him, and yet, if they once broke in, the whole game was up.

"There's only one thing," Flame Carney

was whispering in his ear. "The door in there—we've got to go out in the living-room and listen in there."

"You're right," Kane whispered, and started crawling toward the door into the main room. He had to hand it to her; her mind turned three revolutions to his one.

But before he got started, she had her hand on his arm again.

"Not you," she said. "Me."

He tried to shake her hand off gently, not wanting her to take the chance out there. But she made him let her go.

"You're too big," she said. "I know the place—ever inch."

She crept out by him and left him waiting in his own doorway. There was a little light coming in the window in the living-room from some sort of moon outside. He could see her go along—without a sound—stop at the door, listening.

THEY talked—the man and the woman—in the next room, softer and lower as they went along. That was a good sign, of course. But John Kane learned nothing till the talking finally stopped and he saw the figure of the Carney girl at their door move finally and come back to him.

"It's all right," she whispered, "for the minute."

She came in and sat down by him, and told him about what she got listening.

"They didn't find it," she told him, "that telephone thing of yours. He must have smashed it when he slammed her back against the dresser."

"Was he hurting her much?" Kane wanted to know.

"No. She convinced him she wasn't in any frame-up. That she believed you were what you said you were—me introducing you and being—in here—with you. She talked him over finally. She would, for that matter. That's just what she does think—that you're Scar Henry."

"And now what?"

"That's it," said Flame. "They don't know what to think. They're both up in the air, and the Greek's half crazy."

"What do you suppose he does think?"

"They figured it out together, and the best thing they could do was that I was lying probably. That you were somebody I'd fallen for, and was hiding out for some reason—and using this outside crook's name to throw everybody off the scent. The last idea they'll fall over—either one of them—is the real thing—knowing me—that I'd be in here with a—an officer."

John Kane noticed the last word. It was the first time he had ever heard her speak of the police without some slurring nickname.

"So we are safe for the present, anyhow," she told him. "We would be—for that matter."

"How do you make that out?" Kane asked.

"Just put yourself in the place of that Greek—that rat," she advised him. "He can't move one way or the other—can he?—till he finds out just what is going on. If we are all right, he'll want to stay here, anyhow—not excite suspicion by ducking out just now. And if we're all wrong—if I've found out, say, what he'd done to The—and got my crowd out to finish him, we'd be watching him probably—or somebody else we had would—to get him on the outside before we tackled him. And getting out might be just the worst move he could make. Oh, you don't know," she said, "what things go on in this kind of a bunch, when once they get out after each other."

"Thank God, no!" said Kane. "But what about her?" he whispered. "That Vernon girl? Won't he get loose from himself some night and finish her?"

"He can't—not yet."

"Why not?"

"She's the only thing he's got to work on us with and find out what's going on here. And, of course, she fell in with that idea—she promised everything he wanted, naturally."

"What's the main thing he's after?" Kane asked her.

"To get us out in the open—to be looked over," she answered him.

And then she told him the idea that those two had been talking over inside the door while she was there, listening. They talked low, naturally; she could only get a part of it—but enough to show the general plan they had, which was to pull Kane and the girl both out of the flat to the dance that next night—so Blaney and some of the rest would look them over and see who Kane was.

"All right. We'll give them a chance," said Kane. "We'll have to—unless Monahan comes in sooner."

And at that he noticed she began all at once shivering—as if she had suddenly got out of her control.

"What is it, girl?" he asked her, using that name again that he had promised himself he wouldn't.

"I don't see what they're holding off for—Monahan and the rest—after that note of yours last night," she said, and started shivering worse yet.

He saw, of course, what it was—the strain, the anxiety of waiting and wondering about her brother.

"Don't worry too much. It's coming out right. Monahan will see it's all looked after—about him," he told her, when she began to cry a little. "Don't!"

And, without half thinking, he put his arm across her shoulder. She had it off, jumping up before it was hardly there.

"None of that!" she said.

"What?"

"None of that sympathy act. That don't go!"

"You're quite a thistle, aren't you?" said John Kane, a little sore at the way she acted—at the way she seemed always to be suspicious of him.

"I have to be," she told him, "fixed the way I've always been."

He didn't know whether it was a kind of apology or not—but yet he could see, after a minute, the sense in it.

Then all at once it struck him it was about time he was writing that note and chucking it out the window to Monahan.

"Flash your light, will you?" he asked her. And he saw, when she did, it was ten minutes past two.

It gave him a little jolt—it was the first time he had been late. So he took a page of paper off his little pocket pad and scrawled on it,

We may need help at dance.

He was in a hurry to write it and get it out—but he figured they could take care of themselves until they got there—to that dance, anyhow.

So she turned her little light out, and he wrapped the paper up round a pebble and tossed it out the window as usual.

He hadn't fastened it on right—being late and in a hurry, and going down it looked to him as if the paper got unwrapped and went sliding down by itself. He lost it then, so he didn't see, naturally, whether it was picked up or not.

He thought at first maybe he would write another one, but he made up his mind it would probably be all right, anyhow. The man down there would get it some way.

"Did you see them getting it all right?" she whispered to him.

"It looks so," he told her.

He wasn't going to worry her any more than he had to. She had enough on her mind as it was. And after they planned some more what they would have to do the next day, they both turned in and tried to get some sleep.

THEY got up late that next, and last, day—coming out the usual late hour for breakfast—to keep everything looking natural. The Greek was gone; they heard him going earlier, leaving word he was sorry, but it had to be done. He was like an eel. But it was just as well, after all—as they had figured that it would be—that he was out of the way—on account of that Vida Vernon.

She looked all right one way; he hadn't beaten her up, that is. But she was scared floppy; her eyes were opened up like a watch. And there was no powder needed on her face.

She started into a fit the minute they came out.

"You've got to get me out of this!" she began crying out to Flame Carney.

"What's happened?" Flame asked her back. "Did he beat you up again?"

She didn't answer that—she didn't seem to hear her, even:

"You've got to get me out of this! You got me in, and now you've got to get me out!" she kept repeating, tugging at the other woman's dress.

"What's the matter—are you crazy?" Flame Carney asked her.

"He's onto us!" she came back, still dragging at Flame's clothing until she loosened her hands. "He's going to croak us all!"

"What is this?" Flame asked her, holding her wrists.

She pulled them away and made a jump for the table. There was a napkin there lying loose, and she grabbed that and poured some water out of a glass on it; and while they were watching her, wondering what she was at, she came over with it in front of Kane.

"Listen," she said in a high, crazy voice; "who are you?" And making a pass at him with the wet napkin, she drew it across his face where that phony scar was. "I thought so!" she said, pulling it back.

It only hit a little corner, Kane warding her hand off—but enough to show her.

"I thought so!" she said, glancing at his face and then at the napkin. "I thought so!" And she sat down on the floor, having hysterics, Flame down on her knees beside her—having all she could do to handle her.

"No! No! Let me out of here!" she kept saying over and over again, struggling. "Before he gets back!"

"He won't be back, will he? Not until afternoon," said Flame, arguing with her.

That didn't make any difference; she had to go now—before she got killed.

Flame finally took both her arms in her hands and shook her like a kid.

"Look!" she said, when she had shaken her silent. "Do you want to die sure?" And the Vernon girl looked at her—just like a scared child would—with her eyes red from crying. "If you do," Flame said, "keep right on!"

"But who is he?" Vida asked, still blubbering. "Who are you?" she said to Kane.

"Do you want to know who he is?" Flame asked, turning the girl's face back toward hers.

She nodded her head, staring at her with those frightened baby-blue eyes with red borders.

"He's a dick—from the Central Office," said Flame.

"A dick!" said the other one, standing up on her feet and backing away.

It was lucky, John Kane thought, that she lost her voice at that time instead of finding it. But, even at that, Flame was always right there with her, handling her all the time—would have been, anyway.

"Yes; a dick," she was saying to her. "Lucky for you."

"Lucky!" the other one said, staring.

"You'd be out of luck if he wasn't." And made her sit down while she laid out the program to her—what they were really doing. She took it hard—fighting off at first—getting crazy again to run away.

"No; hold on! Wait!" said Flame, holding her till she was still again. "You know the best way for you to commit suicide?"

No. She didn't.

"I'll tell you, then. Let Joe get loose now—let him get a smell of this thing and get away. You know him, don't you, and what he was planning to do to you anyhow—after The passed along? All right! How long do you think, after this, now, before he'll get you?"

You could see that hit home. The other girl gave a kind of sudden jump when she said it.

"But if you stay in with us," said Flame Carney, "and play on through——"

"A dick!" said the Vernon girl, as if she was talking to herself.

"You know your own proposition," Flame went on arguing. "Your idea that got me into this thing in the first place. The only chance you had."

"What's that?" said the other one in a dull voice.

"To get him first—the Greek—before he gets you. Is that right—or did I dream it?" she said, going after her in that fierce, straight way she had.

"Why, yes," the other one had to admit.

"All right, then. What are you kicking about—when I frame something up for you a lot surer than the thing you wanted?"

"You doubling up with a dick!" said the Vernon woman, staring still more.

"That's my business," said the Carney girl. "If I want to—to pull The and you out—that's my privilege, isn't it?"

AND then she went on and told her what she and Kane were going to do—what they knew would happen and a lot more they didn't know—getting her fixed to keep her mouth shut till after that ball.

"But if he gets you in there," said the Vernon girl, drawing back again, "you know what he'll do. He'll croak you there—in the hall or outside. Pull that old stunt of a dance-fight."

"How—you fool?" asked Flame Carney. "Unless he's going to kill us all. Have some sense. See how he stands—if we all stick, even if he knows we are trimming him! We're safe—all of us. And if you just keep your mouth shut and go on to the dance—do the thing he's framing up for us to do—it will be all over by midnight. By midnight to-night," she repeated—all a pure bluff, of course—"the Greek and Blaney will be headed for the chair and all your troubles will be over—and The's! We'll get the Greek first—just the way you wanted it."

"Do you know this?" the other one asked her.

"Sure I know it! What am I living with a cop for?" Flame Carney said, looking at Kane for a minute, and then turning away, her face fiery red.

But she had the other girl going now.

"Is this right?" she asked, watching her eyes.

"Sure it's right!" Flame answered her. "Isn't it?" she asked Kane.

"Nothing surer," he chimed in.

"The whole place will be surrounded," lied Flame Carney. "He can't get away."

"And will I be taken care of afterward?" the Vernon girl said, convinced—starting bargaining for herself.

"You sure will!" Kane told her.

"I'll stick," she said finally.

"But will she?" Kane asked Flame Carney when they had gone over the thing—the three together—and he and Flame had gone back to their room to look and see how much damage she'd done to that false scar on his face.

"Sure—she'll stick," she told him.

"Why?"

"She didn't come through to him last night, did she? She didn't give herself away —in spite of all the threatening she got?"

"No."

"She knows the way she's got to go—the only way out for her—that's why. She knows I'm telling her the truth about what he'd do to her if he got away after this thing."

"Would he get her, you think?"

"Would he get her?" she said, with a hard look.

John Kane couldn't help thinking what she must have seen. And then the next minute she was going on, looking out for Kane himself—his interests.

"That isn't what's worrying me," she said.

"What is?"

"You."

"Me?" said Kane, watching her. "Don't worry about me."

"For I didn't tell her in there the whole truth—about how we really stand. If the Greek should ever really get wise to what is going on!"

"Stand—how?"

"He wouldn't have to croak us all—not to get what he wants, would he?"

"Why not?"

"He'd only need to get one—that's all. The only one whose testimony would count."

"And that is?" asked Kane watching her.

"You know who it is," she told him. "Don't play you don't. There's only one in the three whose testimony the police or the district attorney would take for anything—and that's yours! And you know what he's getting you to that dance for—to have Blaney look you over. Does Blaney know you?"

"I don't think so," Kane told her. But in his heart he wasn't exactly sure. They said Blaney was apt to watch all the new men on the force as they came in. "Don't worry about me. I might do some of the shooting myself," he told her. "Anyhow, I'll stick. I'll have to—won't I?—till I'm pulled off. And don't fret, girl—any more than you have to. We'll get your brother out all right."

"I suppose that's what you might call sticking to your post," she said, looking at him, "what you're doing here."

"You might at that," Kane answered, shifting up a little, thinking she was slamming the police again, "if you wanted to."

"You're a man—I'll say that for you!" said Flame Carney, her face flushing up. And then she turned onto other things—especially the fixing-up of that scar on his face.

It was getting a little dull, he thought, in addition to that dab the Vernon girl had wiped off the corner of it. It looked a little dim and ragged in spite of all the Carney girl could do. But what was there to do about it? Kane had to go ahead just the same, whether it was good or not. So he told her finally it was good, first-class, all right—and let it go at that.

THE girls spent the great part of the day by themselves, putting together what they were going to wear that night. Kane stayed in his room and read some and slept some, and wondered more—what Monahan was doing, whether that last note got to him out of the window the night before, just how far they could count on them when they got into that hall.

The Greek didn't come the first of the afternoon. They didn't think he would, and the girls kept on fooling with their dresses and planning for the night, and Flame talking to the other one and steadying her while they were on their gowns. The Vernon girl was going in bright green; Flame had just the one dress to wear now—the black velvet she had left over from the dance the year before. She hadn't been dancing much those past few months.

"I don't care a whole lot about going to-night—even if we have got to do it," she told Kane—one of those times she came into their room to get something.

"Naturally," said Kane, knowing her mind was not away from her brother a minute.

"There was a time," she told him, "I wouldn't have cared. *Heraus* with it! Anything to let myself go—to forget! And there's something to be said for that idea at that," she said, looking up again at him with those wonderful eyes of hers—reckless-looking things sometimes when she let them be, and then again as hard as ice.

"Like the liquor for a man," said Kane.

"Maybe," she told him. "But not now—not for me. All the life seems gone out of me to-day." And then, suddenly stiffening through her whole body, she lifted and bit at the back of her hand like a wild creature.

"Don't!" said Kane, taking hold of her, stopping it—but knowing, of course, what she was always tearing at in her mind. "He's all right, I tell you. The least the governor will do is to give him a stay until we can come in with what we've got to say."

"All right. I guess so," she said, dabbing the white teeth-marks on her hand with handkerchief and then pushing her hair back from her forehead and brightening up, the way she did by main strength and will-power. And went out again to keep that Vida Vernon going.

All the afternoon he could hear them out there—fussing over their dresses, fixing up each other's hair and nails—Flame still talking to Vida, bracing her up, getting her ready for the Greek when he came—and that last evening!

When he did come finally, he certainly didn't look dangerous on the surface. He was all smiles and kind words and affection and excuses—especially for the Carney girl.

"I just got word," he told her, "about it—over the long-distance from Albany. That's what's kept me away all day again, waiting for it. The governor's coming through—but not to-night."

"Not to-night!" repeated Flame, acting scared—without much trouble probably.

"No. I'm sorry about that," he lied to her. "There was some reason they had for holding it until after the dance. Can you keep a secret?" he asked, giving a wise smile, or pretending to, with those black Judas-eyes of his. "What it is is this—if you will keep it behind your eyebrows strictly," he went lying on, lowering his voice and looking round for effect. "The real truth is the paper's all signed and out in Albany. We've seen it, but they're getting the governor to hold it off a day—so that the little purse they'll pull out for The at the dance to-night—when we've got all the pols and big gamblers out—won't lose by it."

John Kane just looked at him, keeping the expression out of his face—trying to. He'd have given his shoes to have him alone, where he could have broken his dirty, lying neck. But they all stood there, playing their parts pretty well, even the empty-faced blonde, as he went lying on.

"But you know the truth," he said, talking now, all the time, straight at Flame. "You can go to the dance and rest easy—knowing what you do. Shake the shimmy and enjoy yourself"—ending up with a laugh and a pat on the shoulder the way those black boys have with the women.

Flame laughed back—that reckless laugh that came from her sometimes with that reckless light in those green-blue eyes.

Kane wondered how she kept up—knowing now how her mind really acted, how it must strike her—that stuff about her brother.

THEY sat out in the living-room—the Greek and Kane—and smoked while the women were in the Greek's room dressing each other for the dance; and Kane went on, carrying out his act, keeping up the farce as well as he could. But he was glad when the two women were through dressing and the Greek went in to put on his dress suit and Flame came back again to their own room.

"Is she all right? Will she stick?" he asked her again.

"Sure!" she told him. "I've got her scared worse than he has."

She wasn't worrying about that now, it seemed. Apparently she had something else on her mind.

"What is it, girl?" he asked her finally. "Is there anything new?"

"What do you suppose he is thinking now?"

"Who?" he asked, knowing full well already.

"The. Sitting there—waiting!"

"They're feeding him the same old fairy-tales about the governor probably," said Kane, doing the best he could for her.

"Maybe," she said. "If he believes them."

"He may at that," said Kane.

"But what do you suppose he thinks about me—three days without a word?" she said in the low voice that always they had to talk in, getting hoarser and lower as she talked. She didn't cry; but it was worse—the way she stared.

"The question is," said Kane, putting his hand on her shoulder, meaning to comfort her, "what he'll think of you when we've pulled this off for him."

She gave a little queer gesture—had a queer expression on her face that Kane didn't quite understand.

"I wonder," she said.

"What?"

"What he will think of me—now? After all this stunt—here, with you—if he does come free?" she said, and went on, before Kane fairly got her meaning: "But you're right, at that. This is the time to forget—everything. There's nothing left in the world now—but to-night!"

And not so long after that the taxi came to carry the four of them to the Hectic Club dance.

THE dance of the Hectic Club on every Easter Monday evening is an occasion of great joy, attended by many and varied joy-makers, in addition to the good thieves. Next to the dance of the big gamblers, it is perhaps the gayest of all dances in the eternally gay underworld.

Special privileges are extended it by those in position to extend them—some not unconnected with a room without windows at the left of the hall marked "Mineral Spring" and the much forbidden sale of liquor; others dispensing with the too close surveillance of the police, and in fact with a general freedom from restraint upon that holiday occasion, due principally to the friendly offices of politicians who plead each spring with success that the "boys and girls" should be allowed to loosen up and have their good times once a year, as much as the folks on Fifth Avenue.

There are others, also, who are not averse to loosening up with them in that great moral democracy of the annual dance of the good thieves. The pols are there—with and without their wives—smiling, laughing and shaking hands most heartily with a profane gladness contrasting sharply with their somber black suits. Minor judges of minor courts are there. The retained lawyers of the good thieves—who may or may not be elected minor judges later. The professional bondsmen they most favor or who most cultivate their profitable business. The more social and friendly of the police—but out for pleasure strictly and not duty—ununiformed, of course. The little gamblers and the big gamblers with their wives—too fat from restaurant-eating, lit up with diamonds like cut-glass chandeliers. All these and many more—of even higher standing in New York politics or legal machinery—join in with the good thieves and their merry women to make Easter Monday in old Jasper Hall the maddest, gladdest season of the year.

It is always well toward midnight before the dance really starts to warm up beneath the paper streamers in the bare old ugly hall and the holiday temper begins to show itself in the vivacity of talk and cries and well-liberated emotions.

At this stage of the dance, two men sat at one end of the ancient balcony, apparently discussing casually but very earnestly two tall figures that had been dancing much together that special night—a man with a marked scar on his right cheek and a girl with flame-red hair in a black-velvet dress and wearing a string of jade beads—who were followed by more whispers and side glances than any couple in the hall.

"That's the one," said the taller of the watchers from the balcony with barely moving lips, as he followed the figure of the man with his eyes. "I got him right away. He just came on the force two weeks ago."

The other man—with a long, straight nose—watched with the same strange, studied combination of indifference and fear—cursing now with sudden surprise.

"Trailing us," he said. "Out of the Central Office!"

"It's Monahan after me again," said Slip Blaney.

"What'll we do?" asked Joe the Greek.

"What do you think he could have got out of you—in the flat?"

"Nothing—out of me. I wasn't there—only nights."

"What about his listening in nights? How are your bedrooms fixed?" asked Blaney with his barely moving lips, as he smiled down at a hand-waver from the floor. "Smiling Blaney," he was sometimes called.

"No! No!" said the other one—and then gave a sudden start of recollection. "Unless—" His eye went suddenly down among the dancers and sought out a woman in a bright-green dress—a slim blond girl with a very white face, who had waved nervously at them when she had looked up at them in the balcony as she danced by underneath.

And then he told Blaney about the strange insistence of his woman—that Vida Vernon—upon open windows and fresh air since the two visitors had been in the flat.

"That's it!" said Slip Blaney, with conviction. "She's not only talked but she's brought them in—and got him listening in on you somehow."

And the Greek, watching the slow-moving maelstrom of laughing dancers underneath, told under his breath of the horrors he was going to inflict on the woman in the green gown.

"That ain't the question," Slip Blaney interrupted him.

"What is?"

"The question is—how to keep ourselves out of the chair," he said, smiling again, as he said it, and raising his hand to another friend in the opposite balcony.

The Greek cursed vilely. His close-set eyes had the same sparkle of fear as a cornered rat's, an animal to which he had often been compared—like many others in the underworld. He had not Slip Blaney's remarkable gift for covering his emotions with smiles.

"How will we?" he asked nervously.

"There's only one way," said Blaney, with the end of a smile lingering on his thin, supple actor's face. "Croak him to-night! Before he gets in touch with Monahan again."

"Croak him? What good would that do—with the two women out against me—to get my life?"

"Your life—you wop!" said the other, his smile narrowing to a grimace of pain and scorn. "What about mine? Listen," he went on persuasively, his long, thin hands on the other's sleeve; "the women are all right. We don't need to worry about them. You can take care of yours, can't you?"

"You watch me," said the Greek, with a gesture of cruelty.

"Even if you didn't, it would make no difference—her testimony. And for the other one—after what they've all sworn to in court already—if she came out now with a story like that against us, we'd make a monkey of her. "No," said Slip Blaney softly, the mobile muscles around his mouth wrinkling in an expression that was half a smile. "There's only one party who really interests us in this thing."

"How'll we get him?" asked the Greek, staring at the dancers down below.

THE dance of the Hectic Club was warming up well—both the bodies and the souls of its patrons as they looked down upon it—the slowly turning shoulders of the women, spotted with the green and yellow confetti, their very smooth or very ornate hair, their overbright complexions, their smiles and supple movements as they clung to the black coats of the heavier-moving men. Light, joyous young creatures, full of the exhilaration of the time—that time of color and warm odors and the glad insanity and forgetfulness of the jazz.

Slip Blaney sat looking down at them, considering.

"They'll be bringing out some new confetti and streamers the next dance or two," he said.

"Yeah?"

"You go down and pass round the word to one or two of your bunch that that scar on his face is phony—and what he really is. They'll see it's a phony-looking scar. I can, from here."

"All right," said the Greek, listening.

"Then you go and get some girl you know—your own woman, if you say so—and get a handful of confetti or that other paper stuff—those little ribbons; and when you go by them dancing sometime, you bump them. 'And when you bump, have your girl reach up and scrub that face of his—that scar—good and hard—so he'll know it. Then start a free-for-all with him."

"I get you," said the Greek, his rat's eyes brightening.

"You know what'll happen," went on Slip Blaney almost motionlessly. "It'll show up that phony scar in the first place—or a part of it. And you'll get your scrap—if you're any good—in the second."

"I'll get the scrap," the Greek promised.

"And then, when you get to talking raw and loud, get your bunch to hustle him out of the room—into that little old committee-room—the one with the door into the alley—the old Hole in the Wall."

"The Hole in the Wall!" said the Greek, with memories in his mind of the many escapes from unpleasant situations which had been made through it—recorded in the oral traditions of the underworld.

"Not too big a crowd—four or five. Tell them that he is in here, trailing a lot of them, and has got the goods—anything you think of. Whisper to them you're leading him in there for a going-over and a little lesson—to give him the bum's rush at the end of it out into the alley. And when you get him in there," said Blaney, his lips moving barely more than a ventriloquist's, his eyes roving round to see that no one watched or overheard, "you can keep working yourself up—getting uglier—more excited, and, finally, when the time comes—let him have it."

"They holding him, probably, all the time," said the Greek, quick to catch the humor of the situation he had developed.

"Sure!" said the other. "And then break for the door and make your getaway. And leave him there for them to take care of."

"Yes," said the Greek, smiling a black smile of appreciation of what he saw was one of the masterpieces of Slip Blaney's genius for intrigue. "He'll be on their hands to take care of."

"Sure!" said Blaney, not unappreciative of his own work. "It'll be their move."

And the Greek, restless, already looking down on the floor to see the one about to be concerned among the dancers, nodded.

"Out he goes!" said Blaney. "Out the Hole in the Wall into the alley—like many another big stiff before him!"

The other one, with both nervousness and anticipation in his face, was already rising to go down.

"And I'll be out there by the door on the outside, seeing things are being kept clear for you." The Greek was out of his seat, going by him. "Don't forget this," the thin motionless lips of Blaney were telling him: "Don't make any mistake. When you get him—get him right—through the head."

"Don't worry," said Straight-nosed Joe, turning up the side aisle.

The other, half turning, watched him with his ready smile—a very peculiar smile now, indeed—a smile furtive, sinister, almost menacing.

"WHAT'S this?" cried John Kane, grunting as the man's body struck him and the exceedingly white-faced girl in the green dress reached up with a strident laugh and scrubbed his face with a handful of colored paper.

His cheek was scratched, a piece of confetti stuck its edge into his eye, and the weight of the man against his leg strained his knee painfully and almost threw him down.

Half blinded by the paper in his eye, John Kane, working at last successfully to get it out, heard the Greek cursing him for his awkwardness.

"What do you mean, you big stiff," he said, "by walking over people like that? You ought to be in the bull-pen—not dancing round with civilized people. For fifty cents I'd smash you—big as you are!"

John Kane, feeling the warning clutch of Flame Carney on his arm, held himself back, realized through his sudden, pained confusion that something untoward was going on.

"Oh, look what's here!" cried the Greek in a sharp, jeering voice to a crowd of men that had some way gathered round him. And he came up, almost laying his pointing finger on the smeared scar upon Kane's right cheek. "What'd I tell you?" he said to the three or four big men who were closing in on him and Kane. "It's phony. Just the same as he is!"

"Look out!" Flame Carney whispered in Kane's ear. "We're framed!"

He had hardly heard her when a crowd of men brushed her aside, were on him, crushing him, pressing his useless arms beside him. The dance in their immediate vicinity was suspended.

"Gentlemen," said the watchful floor-manager, with the suave but peremptory manners of the referee of a prize-fight, "this must stop."

"Don't worry. We'll get him out. The bum's rush for you!" said a leader. And suddenly John Kane, big as he was, felt himself, in spite of his struggling, carried bodily, helplessly, half strangled by the hand over his mouth, through a door in the wall beside him, which opened as the crowd approached and closed after them. The sound of low cursing and scuffling feet was over, and the little company of men stood for a second in a small bare room—noiseless but for the muffled sounds of the music in the hall beyond and the heavy breathing of the men. The silence was quickly broken.

"How the hell did you get in here?" asked the voice of the Greek sharply.

The hands of the men at Kane's face relaxed so that he strained his head around.

"You put me out—if you can!" said Flame Carney. "If you want men in here in two minutes that will spatter rats' brains all over the ceiling——"

"Let her stay—if she wants to," said one of the men with Kane—while another one behind him extracted Kane's pistol from his pocket. "She may help us out."

"If she stays, she'll have herself to thank," said Joe the Greek. "You better go—while you're alive," he told her. A queer, desperate light had come into his eyes since he saw her there—the expression of a man cornered, driven by an unforeseen happening on to unforeseen and desperate action. "I advise you to go," he said grimly, "while you've got the chance."

One of the others laughed.

"Let her stay," he advised. "She may learn some things she don't know about her fly cop."

Flame Carney gave a sudden start.

"Fly cop!" she cried shrilly. "Who says so?"

"I can prove it," said the Greek. "I've known it right along," he lied. "All the time you were up there in the flat with us!"

"You lie!" said Flame Carney, lying angrily in her turn, "and you know it."

"I proved it already to the satisfaction of these men," he said, with a glance at the grinning group. "This thing is enough," he went on, going up to Kane struggling with his captors, and touching the smeared painted scar upon his cheek. "Oh, you can't put that over on us!" he said, giving Kane's cheek an ugly jab with his forefinger.

"Ask him! Let him speak for himself!" cried Flame, standing facing them—apparently more and more excited by what she saw. "You won't yell—will you?" she asked Kane to promise.

John Kane promised with his head that he would not.

"Let him loose!" said Flame Carney, coming closer. "He won't lie to you! He's no cheap Greek murderer," she said, with a glance at the latter.

"All right," said the ringleader beside her. "We'll take the chance. If he does holler, it won't be but just one yelp."

John Kane, released, stood looking at them a moment, getting back his breath enough to speak.

"Are you a dick?" asked Flame Carney. "Tell me!"

John Kane looked at her—and then at the Greek. It had needed no word from her to assure him that they were the victims of one of the sinister and sometimes fatal frame-ups which are not unusual in the dispensation of private justice as seen in the world of thieves.

"If I tell you the truth," he asked them. "will you put her out of here?"

"We might," said the leader. "Yes."

"I am—yes," said Kane, after a minute. "But she doesn't know it. I put it all over her," he said, with a kind of raw laugh, 'just the same as I've put it over you—just the same as you'll all get yours for this now! Now put her out. I don't want to see her any more. I've got all I needed out of her," said John Kane, sneering.

THE temper of the crowd—as perhaps he had expected—changed noticeably from half-laughing roughness to anger.

But the greatest change came in the face of the girl.

"You dirty beast!" she cried, and, leaping forward like a lithe animal, struck Kane in the face with her flat hand.

"Don't let her fool you!" cried the sharp voice of the Greek. "It was a plant—from start to finish. Just as I told you. They were in it both together—she as much as he was! For thirty cents I'd croak the both of them."

And now, with a quick motion, he flashed out his gun.

The face of Flame Carney had the expression of some wild hunting creature about to spring.

"Put it up, Joe!" said the voice of one of the men, anxiety sounding through its rough carelessness. "Don't be a damn fool!"

The voice of the Carney girl broke in. "No! Don't put it up! Give it to me!" she cried hysterically. "Give it to me! You say I lie! Give it to me!"

And she sprang in front of the Greek, between him and Kane.

One of the others laughed indulgently—the laugh of a rough man at the capricious weakness of woman.

"What would you do with it?" he asked her.

"I'll show you!" said Flame Carney wildly. "I'll show you who was lying! I'll —I'll croak this thing here!" she cried, now indicating Kane. "That's what I'll do!"

The good thieves, accustomed to the transitory and finally harmless emotions of their own women, laughed at the huge joke of it.

"Give it to her, Joe," they said. "Go on; call her bluff!"

It was several seconds before Joe Anargas came through, and smiled finally.

'I'll just about do that little thing," he said then—and passed the automatic to her, still smiling

John Kane, watching between his captors, looked at her with amazement, almost with fear. She was a lithe young fury, a strident-voiced goddess of Vengeance. Her strange-colored red hair had fallen, torn down in the struggle coming in the door; her jade eyes stared like night-eyes from a jungle.

"And now *you*!" Flame called, turning with smooth swiftness. "I mean—*you!*"

JOHN MONAHAN, at his desk in the small office, looked up at the three young plain-clothes men whom he had picked because he believed they were straight and because neither Blaney nor the pols and crooks in that Hectic Club dance would know them.

"We know what we've got to do," he said, "now we've located that last message from Kane finally.

"You two," he said to the first two—the youngest ones, whose names were Paget and Mitchell—"will go inside and keep your eye out and help out Kane—if you ever see he needs you.

"But for you," he said to the last one—the one named Zimmer, Adolph Zimmer—"I've got another kind of a job. I want you to keep your eye on the Hole in the Wall."

"The Hole in the Wall?"

And Monahan explained it to him—about that back entrance on the alleyway—and what he wanted him to do there, and gave his orders about what to do if Blaney or the Greek should come out, and how he was not to move from there under any circumstances.

"And I'll be over here," he told the other two, "by the drug store opposite—so if any time you need me, you'll get me quick."

And then he started them out and took his place where he told them that he would, across the street.

He was waiting there when the two of them in the hall came running over and told him there was something wrong on over there—in that room—that they had got Kane and the girl in there, and when they started to break in after them, they'd hustled them out of the place. And that Blaney had run out.

So Monahan told the two of them to run and watch at the entrance of that blind alleyway and help out Zimmer if they thought he needed them. And then he went over into the hall himself.

"Send over for the floor-manager," he said, going over by the door of the anteroom, "and tell him I want him here. And be damned quick about it!"

But as he said it there was the faint crack of a pistol—too faint, it seemed, almost, to come from that room inside; then, with a short interval of silence, the door-key turned inside and a half a dozen men came tumbling out.

John Monahan, with his own gun out, went in the door they left open, and, after one look, turned and locked the door behind him to shut out the gathering crowd.

Young Adolph Zimmer, in the deep old-time doorway in the little, dim-lighted pocket of a street, hugged the shadow of his place of hiding and alternately gave way to bored dejection and sudden starts of apprehension and responsibility.

It was a damp night; the light of the one gas-lamp and its reflection along the paving and on the pink-brick wall behind served principally to make the darkness round it more visible, and to emphasize the ugly possibilities of the dingy old brick warehouses which loomed above and beyond it, empty of life as the old skulls of dead men. Even the smells of the place, exaggerated in the dampness, seemed sinister and evil.

He stood there hours, it seemed, waiting—on one foot and then the other—watching the few signs of life, the sharp shoulders and bony tail of a prowling alley cat, the gray, alert nose of an inquisitive young rat poked out of the sewer entrance beneath the street light. He heard, confused and indistinct, the jumble of the music inside the hall, which, like the street-light, rather emphasized than relieved his loneliness. He wondered spasmodically whether Monahan really did have a hunch about this thing as they said he did—whether there might be something to it or whether it was all a false alarm. And finally, after too long wondering and attention, he ceased to wonder at all and stood there, stupid and uncomfortable—almost resentful.

Then, peering out for the thousandth time, he thought he saw a figure in the light at the entrance of the place stop, look hurriedly round and come into the alley's mouth. He crowded back into his doorway. The steps of the approaching man came on—soft, but still loud enough in that dead alleyway. He thought at last that they would pass by his place of hiding.

But, instead, they stopped just before they got to him, arrested, apparently, some twelve or fifteen feet away at the back entrance to the hall—that Hole in the Wall that he was watching. After an ample wait he peered out from his hiding and saw the back of the man waiting there, watching, like himself, and thought, with a sudden lump of apprehension in his throat, that it looked—as well as he could see it in that light—like the back of Slip Blaney.

Whoever it was seemed restless, stood tense, watching that dim entrance—that Hole in the Wall—with his right hand in his right coat pocket.

He moved. Zimmer jumped back, but as he did so, involuntarily looked out again. For he heard distinctly—inside somewhere—the muffled crack of a pistol-shot.

The man before him still stood watching; his right arm in his pocket stiffened. There was the sound of an opening door, a slam as it closed, and a man jumped down the two steps onto the pavement.

"Run, Slip; run!" said Joe the Greek in a stage-whisper. And as he said it, the tense arm of the man at the entrance whipped out from the pocket and, at the second sharp crack of a pistol, the man in the exit went down.

Zimmer jumped, his heart in his mouth, his own weapon in his hand. The shooter did not see him, nor did he, as Zimmer had expected, start to run. He was certainly cool—an old, experienced hand, you would have inferred, at murder. He had knelt down with a swift movement and examined the figure on the ground—shot, Zimmer saw, through the head.

THE figure, lying on its side, moved once, gave a convulsive kick, as the young policeman had seen slaughtered animals do, and lay still. He was dead without a question. And then, as quickly as he had stopped, the murderer rose and turned to run back through the alley—and looked into the muzzle of Zimmer's automatic.

"Just a minute!" said young Adolph Zimmer, with quietness in his voice and a sense of giddiness, of intense lightness in his feet.

And at the same time he heard the sound of steps from the mouth of the alley—of Paget and Mitchell running up with their guns out.

Slip Blaney looked from one to the other of their faces—must have recognized one, at least.

"Why, hello, boys!" he said—that quick smile lighting his face. "You're in on this, too? Well, I hand it to you. You're good for greenhorns; but you wouldn't have got him at that, I don't believe. You weren't placed quite right. There's a good getaway in the back of this place here you wouldn't know about as I do, being longer in the business. He'd have got away from you, I'm afraid," said Slip Blaney, his speech and his smile both growing easier.

"I'll tell you how I happened to get here, boys," he said when no one spoke, and smiled again his ingratiating smile at Zimmer, who stood nearest to him, now with his gun slightly lowered, "so you can get how it is done. There was a bad man," he said, looking down, indicating Joe the Greek with the toe of his shoe. "I saw him starting something inside the hall, and I took a chance. I took a sneak and ran in back, and took a try at getting him back here, coming out of this place. 'The Hole in the Wall,' they call it. I know, because I've been here before."

"I guess you have, at that," said Zimmer, the oldest of the young cops, being the first to find his voice.

"Yes," said Blaney, with a quick and friendly smile at him; "you learn the ropes after a while. I can give you a lot of points, boys, and I will, as time goes on—and we get more friendly on the force together.

"You saw what happened—or heard it, anyway," he continued, turning now again to Zimmer. "You heard, as I did, I guess, that shot inside, and then this man bursting out from this door. You heard when I hollered at him to stop. I hollered twice. You must have heard me. And when he didn't, I let him have it. That's all I could do. You saw that? And I got him good—huh?"—giving Zimmer another sudden smile. "A little better than I expected. But I was in a hurry and I had to shoot quick—the way you do sometimes in this life when you're on duty.

"You saw that boys," said Slip Blaney, going on, looking from one policeman to another, moistening his lips. "Or you did, anyhow," he told Zimmer. "And it's damned lucky for me that I've got you here to testify for me. They're hard on a cop—these reformers especially. They raise hell if you make the least slip of your foot, as we all do sometimes. So we've all of us dicks got to stick together in a jam. You can't tell whose turn will come next. You know that"—taking Zimmer's arm—"all you boys. And now we're together in this thing—and after we get this all fixed right, there's many a turn I expect I can do for you.

"For I'm in right, boys, if I do say so. I'm in right with you know who in this department—way in back under. And, believe me, I can put my friends in right, too. So when Monahan comes into this—brings me up on the carpet, as he's sure to, you want to——"

"Wait a minute," said Zimmer. "Here he is now. Tell it to him."

And looking up the two steps, Slip Blaney saw Monahan in the open door of the Hole in the Wall.

"Bring in here," directed John Monahan.

"God, Chief," said Slip Blaney, looking smilingly into his superior's smileless face, "I got this fellow—too good! But when I called to him, he failed to stop. I heard this shot—I heard this shot inside, and I figured naturally there was gun-play in there—murder, probably, going on in there. And when he came jumping out and I called to him and he failed to stop, there was nothing else to do. I had to let him have it—to stop him."

"You come inside with me," said Monahan in answer. "You got his gun off him?" he asked the three young cops.

"No," said Zimmer, hastening to do so with the great zealousness of one a little late in the performance of a duty.

"I'll take him," said the old chief. "You three stay here. Cover that up. And keep them out—out of the place entirely."

For the curiosity-seekers in the street outside, having located finally where the pistol-shot had come from, were beginning to gather in.

"Stand back there!" said the young plain-clothes men briskly, showing their badges to unbelievers—glad to find a duty whose requirements they were sure of.

JOHN MONAHAN and Slip Blaney went back through the Hole in the Wall.

"You first this time," said the old chief grimly to his overpolite subordinate.

The door closed after them.

The tense figure of the girl in the black-velvet gown stepped forward eagerly in the small bare room—her strange sapphire-colored eyes shining, her white arms stretched out, her mass of flaming hair bound in a hasty knot upon her neck.

"What happened?" cried Flame anxiously. "Did you get the Greek?"

"He did," said Monahan laconically, indicating Blaney. "Sit down," he said to the detective.

But the latter, disobeying him, stood staring at John Kane, standing staring back at him in the corner—in fear, as a man looks at a peculiarly unwelcome ghost.

"He had you down for dead," explained old Monahan to Kane. "That's the idea."

AND now Slip Blaney detached his eyes from Kane and sat down heavily with a kind of groan. There was no vestige now of his easy smile; it was wiped entirely from his face. Without it—that perpetual defense of a grimace—the face looked weak, the chin too small, the eyes unstable and afraid.

"What happened?" demanded Flame again, "to the Greek?"

And Monahan told her gruffly. It made perhaps less impression upon her than with women who had not seen murder at such close range as she had several times before.

"But where," she asked him sharply, "does that leave The?"

"It leaves us all just right—don't it, Blaney?" Monahan could not resist asking the slumped figure in the old wooden armchair of the committee-room.

Slip Blaney cast his faded eyes up and then down again without answering.

"Now, then," asked Monahan, turning from him to the girl again "what happened here—with you?"

"Nothing much," said Kane, speaking for her. "Only, she saved my life—that's all—by her quick wit and good management."

"Oh, what's the use?" said Flame Carney, reddening at his praise. "All I did——"

"I know what you did," said John Kane, breaking in a little loudly. "I ought to. If it wasn't for what you did, I wouldn't be standing here now. I'd be lying—the way that Greek is out there this minute."

"And the real witnesses in the case both gone, huh?" said Monahan, addressing the remark to Kane—for the benefit of Blaney.

"But go on," he told the girl again. "Tell it to me—just what you did."

Then she told him the trick by which she wheedled the gun away from the Greek—and his dashing out, trying to get away from her—when he saw from her face what she was going to do. And his jump behind the others and her shot at him as he ducked and made his getaway through the Hole in the Wall. And then how the others started in—scared—to take the gun away from her, and she and Kane, who had broken loose in the mix-up, being backed up together in the corner. And the rest of them having had enough of it for comfort and, hearing that pistol-shot outside, making their break for the door just as Monahan arrived.

"Young woman," said Monahan, with a look of humorous appreciation in his eye when she was done, "you're there!"

"I'll say she is!" assented John Kane, looking at her with an almost personal pride. But she turned her face away very quickly and decidedly—changed the subject back to something that was deeply scored upon her mind.

"But The?" she asked Monahan.

"That's all taken care of," said Monahan.

"But does The know," she asked him. "Or is he sitting there—sitting—thinking—" she said and stopped, her flexible lips become inflexible with emotion.

"He knows—all there was to know," said Monahan, "till now. That there was a stay. And now, when I take this out over to headquarters with me," he said, indicating Blaney by his gesture, "I'll get word right up to him—of this latest development. That he can turn over and have some sleep. "Come on," said Monahan, now addressing the seated heap that had once been smiling Slip Blaney. "Let's go!"

"But wait!" said Flame Carney, leaning forward, anxiety still in her voice. "Will you do this, too, please, when you send your word—will you tell The how it was—about me? That I didn't quit him the way he's probably been thinking?"

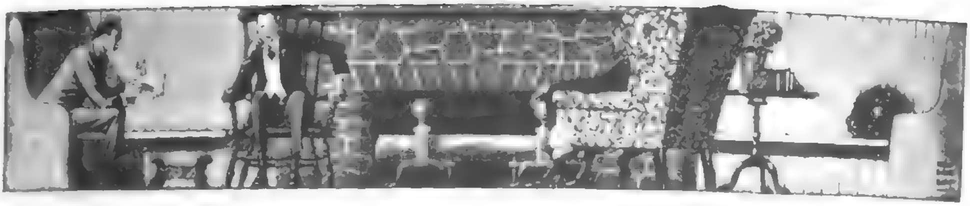
"He'll know that himself," responded Monahan.

"What?"

"Quit him!" said Monahan, without answering directly. "You couldn't quit—if you tried to. You wouldn't know how. You're there!"—with a final outburst of approval. "I wish I had fifty like you on my force. We'd do what they've been threatening to do for a hundred years now—we'd clean up New York.

"Now, you'd better stay here on the scene," he continued, addressing Kane, "while I go over and take care of things and come back. I won't be gone a great while, and if I am, you can find somebody to talk to here, maybe, while I'm gone. Come on"—turning, still smiling, to the smileless Blaney. "It's your move."

The door closing after them—snapping the spring-lock—left the two others in the bare little room, locked in together.



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

STORY-INTEREST is always the dominant element in the work of Harold Titus ("The Beloved Pawn," page 4), but underneath there is also a serious purpose. In "Foraker's Folly" he told of the criminal waste of timber; in "The Beloved Pawn" he makes us acquainted with the romance of the Great Lakes.

I suppose [he writes] it could be only America that would take a great connected series of bodies of fresh water and put them to work so strenuously and then say nothing about them. Just go away and let them work, like a horse or a windlass. Teach a smattering about them in schools, refer patronizingly to them now and then as lovely places, build cities beside them and largely dependent upon them, use products daily that are either made possible or easier of access because of the lakes, be thankful for them in hot weather—and otherwise have little to say about them. Yet they are so big, so important, so beautiful!

OF THEIR importance Mr. Titus goes on to say:

Statistics can never make people understand them. That it is three hundred miles down Lake Michigan from Chicago to Manistique means little; that six hundred feet of water is not an unusual depth; that the tonnage which goes through the locks at Sault Ste. Marie makes the annual tonnage of the Suez Canal seem insignificant—these things mean little in themselves. Try another: No equal area of water that rolls floats as much shipping in a year as does the Detroit River. That falls flat, too. The beauty of the Great Lakes cannot be compared to that of any other water in the world and carry meaning. They are things apart, an influence, a background for important cultural factors that are beyond statistics. There is no locality more American in America than the Great Lakes. The romance of exploration is largely forgotten by America as a whole; the island communities, once so picturesque, are thinning out; railroads have driven the trading hooker off this fresh water; fishing, for the most part, is to-day as efficient and commonplace as most forms of business; the great fleets of freighters go up and down, up and down, hardly noticed, rarely thought about except by those directly interested in shipping. And yet the Great Lakes have their place in our civilization and, in time, that place will be recognized and talked about and respected and the lakes themselves will be studied and appreciated and understood.

SOME of the flavor of these inland seas found its way into "The Beloved Pawn."

The location is real. The Beaver Islands are to-day much as they were a generation ago. Anything could have happened on the Beavers. That's what the gentle priest at St. James said when I put it to him: "*Any*thing might have happened here, my son." MacKinnon, the trader, was one of many who once sailed their small, busy crafts about the lakes. They're mostly gone now, to be sure, but not so long ago they were common and important to the people up there. There have been Eldreds—and worse; there have been crowds of men worse than his collection of scum; the Jen Bordens were scattered about fresh water a few years ago, and some still persist; the Eve Eldreds—honestly, I *hope* that people who read the yarn will think that there never could have been a maiden so lovely. There are so many novels of the Great Lakes to be written. I could go on for the remainder of my writing career and, should it be ever so long, I never could cover the lakes, never could exhaust their possibilities.

HERE is a confession from Alias George Kibbe Turner, whose "Those Who Dance" begins on page 134:

Reader, have you ever led a double life? I have, and I welcome this late day to confess it to you. But start not. Mine is a different double life from your first feverish imagination—a double life not of shame but of name. My name will be given to you by the editor in the pages of this book as "George Kibbe Turner." He lies—though unwittingly, amiably, and with kind intent. My actual name—the name of my soul, my psyche, my actual ego, to

Harold Titus, author of "Foraker's Folly." His new novel, "The Beloved Pawn," a romance of the Great Lakes, begins in this issue.

which only I perfectly vibrate—brain, ganglia, lungs and endocrines—is Geik Turner.

This soul-of-vibration name was given me casually as a schoolboy of thirteen. It was used through school, through college, is used to-day in personal life, and was used in early writing—until, in a moment of temptation, I fell at the solicitation and advice of another. I unveiled my middle name to the public. I was thereafter George Kibbe Turner. I have been printed, introduced, cursed, hailed under that name; I have lived a double life—a life of the unsecreted middle name. But enough of this—my sorrow, my anguish, my refinement of agony are not, reader, yours. They are my own grief. I only mention them myself—in this day of moral lessons in the magazines—to warn you against my fate. Never, never commit the baleful indiscretion that has been mine—unbare to the public eye your middle name; not even yield to your wife's innocent urgence to show it on her visiting-cards. One downward step but leads to another, and you may soon find yourself, as I have been, living half buried under an alias for—never mind how many years.

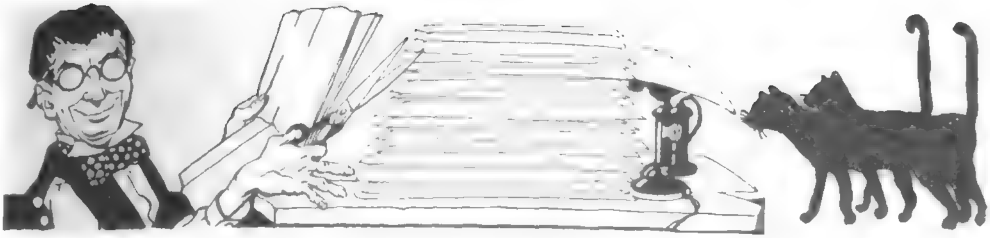
WE LIKE to believe that EVERYBODY'S fiction is a little more real than the average, and the belief is strengthened by the fact that so many of our authors have had unusual, if not always wildly adventurous careers—for instance, Walton Hall Smith, author of "Pandora, Pugh and I" (page 35). He says:

Though born in Kansas City, about midway between the oceans, I have contrived thus far to spend a fair space of time on, in and under water. My friend Ashley thinks I'll die there, "playing hide and seek with the perch." When Ashley went to Tahiti last year, he objected to my company on the ground that I would no doubt be picked off by a shark or something; then it would be his fault. Sharks, he tells me, are scavengers, and not particular. (This is so just that I don't construe it as insulting.)

When I went away to school, I had to quit swimming and playing for a while to do some work. I went to Andover for two years, tutored for a time, and finally, after a terrific struggle, entered Yale, where, after all, I remained but a short time. However, into the five-odd years that have passed since then, I have crowded a little better than the average portion of activity and gained a small idea of things in general. I have made two cruises to the Caribbean with the merchant marine, and to the Mediterranean and Bay of Biscay with the navy, my status being everything from seaman to ensign. I have written advertising copy and solicited advertising business. I have explored the bottom along Lake Michigan's beaches. Incidentally, I have learned a little about the gentle art of getting along. Now I am interested in setting down on paper stories about the things and personalities I have found that seem *colorful* to me—and that any one can find right beside him if he longs for them hard enough.

SEWELL HAGGARD.

George Kibbe Turner, whose exciting novel of New York's underworld, "Those Who Dance," is published complete in this issue.



Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

Near Stoneham, Mass.: *"All trespasters will be persecuted by the bull. Look and leave."*

Between Andover and Reading, Mass.: "FOR SALE. *Nine-acre ten-room house."*

On Colonial Theatre, Haverhill, Mass.: *"Ethel Clayton in 'The Cradle' to-night for the last time."*

On Old Boxford St., Haverhill, Mass.: *"G. Foote, Shoes."*

Still to be seen in Bosting: *"A. B. Drinkwater. Fine Liquors."*

Jurisdictor over a N. J. Juvenile Court: *"Judge Bratt."* (J. J. J.)

(Will J. J. J. please send me his name and address? GRID.)

(Atlanta Journal)

Next Sunday Mrs. Palmour will write on window-boxes. (MISS B. R. S.)

George, be sure and bring ours in to-night.

(Atlanta Constitution)

MORTUARY

The members of the Druid Hills Presbyterian Church and Sunday-school will hold their annual picnic at Piedmont Park Saturday. (MISS B. R. S.)

Usually *is* a dead affair.

(Daily Clintonian)

In re the case of Nick Sagen at Newport, Ind., the grand jury returned an ignoramous in the case.

Not knocking Nick atall.

(Cincinnati Enquirer)

HOUSEKEEPER—For widower, by widow.

Won't you try some more of these weeds? They're delicious.

(Oakland, Cal., Tribune)

ALBANIAN WOMEN DISCARD TROUSERS AFTER 500 YEARS. (T. R. R.)

"Silver threads among the gold."

(Milwaukee Journal)

She admits having stolen caps and aprons, but denies the theft of chinaware and money. This correction is made for the sake of accuracy and fair play.

'S fair enuff.

(In window on Union Square, New York)

HOSIERY WITH A CONSCIENCE

Meaning probably that some "First Nationals" accept no counterfeits.

(Robinson, Ill., Daily News)

DON'T MISS THE FESTIVAL
HEAR THE BAND
EAT ICE-CREAM

What a relief!

(Sigourney, Iowa, News)

Point Gould left for Chicago this morning, where he has a fine position as street-sweeper helper.

Probably curries the brushes.

(Evansville, Ind., Courier)

Chauffeur wants position. Sees but sees nothing. Hears but hears nothing. Talks but says nothing. 1611 E. Franklin.

Boy, call him on the 'phone—quick!

Copyright, 1922, by Gridley Adams

(*Cooperstown, N. Y., Otsego Farmer*)

FOR SALE—200 YEAR OLD WHITE LEGhorns in laying condition. F. J. Sowle, Cooperstown, R. D. 3. (L. E. W.)

Well, who'd take a chance on *their* ever getting up again?

(*Chicago Daily News*)

Will you please give me your method for reducing prominent hips et cetera. C. B. M.

Try the elevated during the rush-hours for the hips; better see a carpenter about your etcet.

(*Los Angeles Times*)

PERSONAL—Young lady going to Minneapolis, July 10, would like to reduce experience. Gar. 2244. (L. A. Z.)

Oh, *anywhere* outside of Los A. will serve just as well.

(*New Haven, Conn., Register*)

FOR SALE—A 3-year-old female billie goat. Ralph Avitable, Liberty Street. (MRS. C. F. C.)

Where ignorance is bliss, etc.

HOTEL STORM
"Home-Like"
Jefferson City, Mo.

***I'll* say it is.**

(*Stock Yards, Chicago, purchasing agent to saleswoman for steel window-sash company*)

You'll have to reduce your figure; your sash is too high.

And, presto, the pane was gone!

(*Hartford Courant*)

Frank Krause, who died in the Rockville City Hospital Monday afternoon after jumping from one of the interurban cars at Tolland ave- G, Yale$,o kzevCVvoFfWFFasoonQDL nue was buried today.

How *did* they keep him so long?

(*Adv. in Rural New Yorker*)

WANTED—Good clean woman for cooking; private family. Address, Box 133, Shrewsbury, N. J. (DR. J. B. B.)

I have one who, if scrubbed up a bit with hot water and lots of soda in it, might do. She's old, and a bit tough, but if spitted and properly turned before a good fire, believe she would cook up nice and tender.

(*Chicago Tribune*)

Judge Landis was the intended victim of the last bomb attempt, a bomb having been sent to him through the mails. It was laid on his desk in the Federal Building. It was exploded by a policeman. The judge is now in northern Michigan.

But where did the policeman land?

(*The Outlook*)

It is also maintained that neutral vessels which go into a field of war, whether on land or sea, must take their own risks.

But the land vessels can't tank up.

(*Iron Ore*)

The friends of Gus Holmgren, city treasurer, desire to make it known that they wish to secure a second term for Mr. Holmgren for the reason that he is incapacitated for work of any kind and is very much in need of the assistance the position would give him.

Head him off or he'll get in the U. S. Senate.

(*Bureau County Republican*)

Born to Mike and William Kairis last week a girl. All well.

Mikraculous!

(*Newark, N. J., Evening Mail*)

Mr. Tierney commended New Jersey and Rhode Island as being the two lone bulwarks of popular sentiment against the curtailing "of the personal liberty once guaranteed us by law."
br⅜yoaUrdluaoinrdluaoin fwyp fwypypp

A thunder-shower cut short the program, etc. (R. T. S.)

Gee! Those last two claps were certainly fierce, all right, all right.

(*Los Angeles Times*)

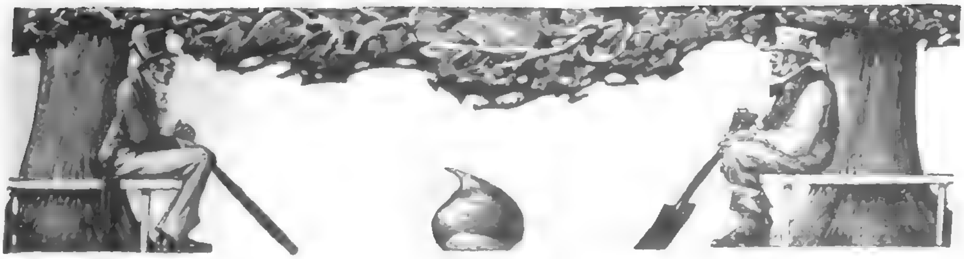
Settled woman wishes to reduce expenses of trip any place near or north of Omaha, Neb. Would accompany corpse. Tel. 65909.

She's just dead set on going.

(*From Leacock's "Discovery of America"*)

Seated in his room at the Grand Hotel, with his carpet slippers on his feet and his body wrapped in a blue dressing-gown with pink insertions, after writing a letter of farewell to his wife and emptying a bottle of Scotch whisky in which he exonerated her from all culpability in his death, Congressman Ahasuerus P. Tigg was found by a night watchman, Henry T. Smith, while making his rounds as usual with four bullets in his stomach.

Oh, death, where is thy sting?



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

A SAP-HEADED young minister who went to a Western settlement to regenerate the inhabitants found himself before long rewarded for his efforts by being ridden out of the community on a rail.

A new arrival on the scene, beholding the poor man's predicament, protested against the godlessness and scandal of the proceedings.

"No," carefully explained the leader of the gang; "we ain't agin religion here, but we do hate to see a cuss spillin' it."

A COUPLE of city chaps summering in the mountains overheard sufficient fish-stories to stir them to the desire to emulate the native anglers. Not having equipment, they persuaded the village storekeeper to lend them some of his own personal outfit with the understanding that any parts lost or broken would be paid for or replaced. They had been out on the lake in a boat about half an hour when one of them inquired of the other,

"What do you suppose Ezra Hawkins calls that red-and-blue thing that floats around on the water?"

"Why, I believe he calls it a float or a floater or a bob or something of that nature. What made you ask such a question?"

"Well, we'll have to buy him one of those. The darn thing has sunk."

"**T**HERE was a strange man here to see you to-day, papa," said little Ethel, on meeting her father in the hall.

"Did he have a bill?"

"No, papa; he just had a plain nose."

SOME wounded soldiers were convalescent in a hospital. A Red Cross nurse had given one of them a book donated by the Y. M. C. A. A sergeant began to read aloud an essay on the Law of Compensation. The soldiers listened, for they were disciplined. At last a voice interrupted.

"Sergeant, I don't see what that guy is getting at."

"Why," said the sergeant, "this feller means to say that if a man should lose one eye, the other eye would become stronger for that reason."

There was silence, and then one of the others spoke up.

"By Jove, he's right! I knowed a man in my home town who had one short leg, and the other leg was longer than that one."

A YOUNG lawyer wrote a prominent practitioner in Dallas, Texas, asking what chance there was for a man of his stamp in that section. He said,

> I am a Republican in politics, and I am an honest man.

The Texan wrote back,

> If you are an honest lawyer, you will have no competition here, and as you are a Republican, the game laws will protect you.

THE colored troops were playing baseball. The chaplain was umpire. The pitcher threw a high one, and the chaplain yelled,

"One strike!"

The batter thereupon turned to him and remarked,

"Mr. Chaplain, you'se done judging dem balls wid your spiritual eye."

ONE morning, a young colored man wandered into a drug store and asked the proprietor if he might use his telephone. Permission being granted, the youth went into the booth, and the druggist overheard the following:

"Ah'd like to speak to Mist' Johnson. . . . Yes, sir; Mist' Johnson. . . . This Mist' Johnson? Say, Mist' Johnson; Ah've been wonderin' if yo' need a boy to cut yo' grass an' run yo' car an' help round de house? . . . Yo' got a boy does it? Yo' puffickly satisfied with him? . . . Uh, huh. All right, Mist' Johnson; good-by."

When the boy left the booth, the druggist called to him.

"If you're looking for a job, I can give you one here," he said. "We need some one to make himself useful."

"Much obliged, boss," said the youth; "but Ah've got a job. Ah works for Mist' Johnson. Ah just been checkin' mahself up."

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN W. LANGLEY, from Kentucky, tells this one in Washington:

A young attorney of Pikeville, who sought county honors, was on an electioneering tour in his district when he called at a house where the head of the family happened to be absent. He told the mistress who he was and that he was a candidate seeking votes at the coming election.

"And it's you!" she exclaimed. "Why, of course my husband will vote for you, bein' it was you that got him cleared of stealin' that meat."

"Say on the *charge* of stealing the meat," the attorney corrected her.

"Charge nothin'!" said the woman. "Why, a part of that meat is hangin' up in the house yet."

"LET go that jib-sheet!"

Whereupon the enthusiastic landlubber, who had been decoyed into acting as crew, responded indignantly,

"Why, I'm not touching the thing!"

A MOTHER wrote a note to the teacher, which read:

> Pardon me for calling your attention to the fact, but you have pulled Johnny's right ear until it is longer than his left. Please pull his left ear for a while, and oblige His Mother.

A PROMINENT New York lawyer was putting a witness through a hard cross-examination when the subject of absent-mindedness arose.

"What do you think is absent-mindedness?" asked the lawyer.

"Well," replied the witness in a slow, deliberate tone, "if a man who thought he had left his watch at home, took it out of his pocket to see if he had time to go back and get it, I would call him a little absent-minded."

IT WAS the eleventh of November, and a darky down South was asked if he knew what was being celebrated that day.

"Suttinly, suh," he replied; "Mistus day, suh."

"Armistice day, Sam," he was corrected.

"No, suh—Mistus day, suh. You see, we was ordered tuh go over de top dat mornin', when along comes de news dat de war was over; so de Germans done mistus suh; dey done mistus."

THE insurance adjuster who had been investigating the fire turned to go.

"I came down here to find out the cause of this fire, and I have done so," he remarked.

"That's what I want to know. What caused it?" demanded the house-owner.

"It's a plain case of friction."

"What-ya-mean—friction?"

"The fire was undoubtedly caused by rubbing a three-thousand-dollar insurance policy on a two-thousand-dollar house."

"THAT'S what I call a finished sermon," said a lady to her husband, as they wended their way home from church.

"Yes," was the reply; "but, do you know, I thought it never would be."

"WHO was over to see you last night?" demanded the stern father.

"Why, no one but Mabel, dad," fibbed the daughter.

"Mabel—huh! Well, next time please ask Mabel not to be so careless. I found her half-smoked cigar on the piano this morning."

AN APT definition for poise is: The quality that keeps a hostess smiling when a departing guest holds the screen door open and lets the flies in.

The Miracle of the Wilderness

IN the heart of a forest—
high up in the purple-topped Adirondacks, where the snows fall early and stay late, a hunter sat down in the great silence to rest.

Leaning on his gun, he fell asleep and dreamed * * *

The forest melted away. In place of the fragrant pines that swept the sky and the giant oaks that closed in about him, quaint cottages dotted the mountain-side. In place of the native fox and deer he hunted, the wilderness was suddenly peopled with many sick—seeking the blessing of health * * *

The huntsman was Edward Livingston Trudeau—"The Beloved Physician." The *doom* of consumption upon him, he was carried to the Adirondacks to make his last days as comfortable as possible.

This was nearly half a century ago. In those days Consumption—now known as Tuberculosis—was looked upon as a visitation of Providence—was considered unpreventable—incurable.

Then came the Miracle—
of fresh air, of sunshine and rest. Soon Dr. Trudeau was hunting and fishing again. The summer past, he returned to the city. A relapse brought him back to try—as a last hope—a winter in the frozen wilderness. Suicidal mania, friends said. Cold air was regarded as fatal to Consumptives.

Dr. Trudeau thrived on it and lived for forty years in the mountains that taught im how to use for himself and others the greatest weapons against Tuberculosis —*fresh air—rest—sunshine.*

Closely following Koch's great discovery that a germ—the tubercle bacillus—uses Tuberculosis, Dr. Trudeau learned to recognize the little "rods of red." Soon physicians everywhere learned to detect the disease in its early stages and ousands of lives were saved. *For it is in its early stages that Tuberculosis can cured.*

To bring the sick—
the many tuberculous sick—from the cities to the healing wilderness was the dream of the beloved physician. He realized his dream when he built the Adirondack Cottage Sanitarium, the first sanitarium for the open-air treatment of Tuberculosis in America—now a wonderful city of houses built *inside-out.*

One million sufferers from Tuberculosis—
is the estimated number in the United States *right now.* The disease attacks lungs, skin, brain and bone. Beggar and millionaire are exposed. It attacks all ages—from babyhood to old age. Acute danger periods are infancy and early adult life. The greatest death toll is exacted between 35 and 45—the most productive years of life—just when the family is most dependent on breadwinner or homemaker.

No medicine will cure Tuberculosis—
but it can be cured by fresh air—day and night, winter and summer, rain or shine. By rest, good nourishment, freedom from worry, and supervision by trained physicians. Most of all, by sunshine in the home and *sunshine in the heart.*
Better than cure is prevention through regular examination by physicians, sanitary living and working conditions, and always fresh air and sunshine.

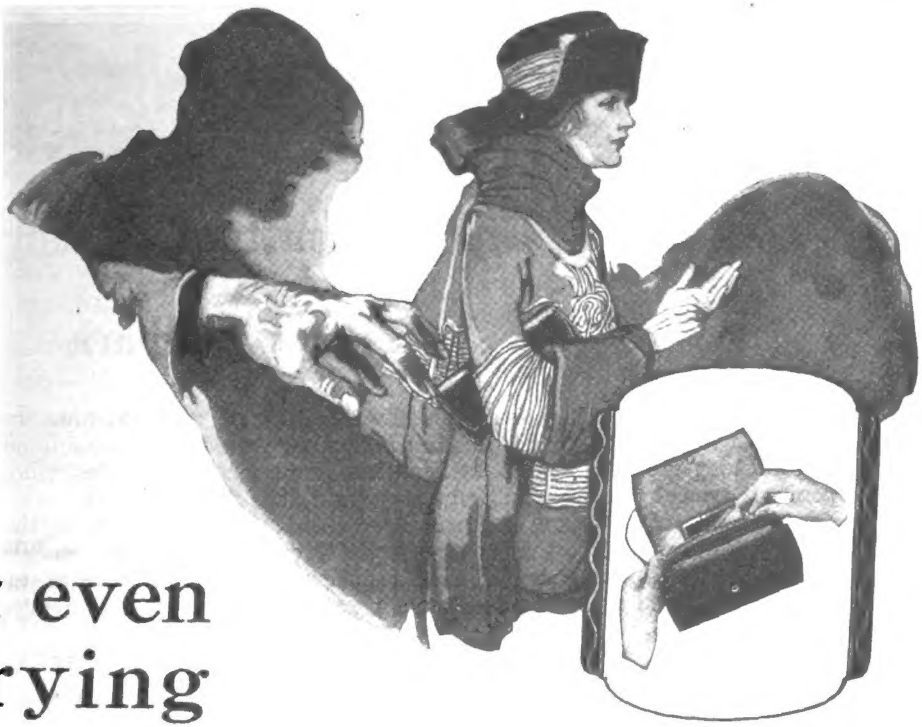
A great crusade is being waged. Since 1904 the Tuberculosis death rate for the United States has been cut in half. But the fight is not the fight of any one country. It is the fight of all Humanity. And when all Humanity *fights* then shall the Great White Plague that has whitened the world with tombstones for more than two thousand years be driven from the Earth.

THE LIGHT THAT NEVER FAILS

Before health work was started, there was a death from tuberculosis every eight minutes of every working day of eight hours among Metropolitan policy holders. The disease still causes one-twelfth of all the deaths in this country. If this proportion is allowed to continue, it means that among the people now living in the United States over 9,500,000 are doomed to die from this *preventable* disease. Working with National, State and local organizations—the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company has reduced the Tuberculosis death rate, for its policy holders, 49% in ten years. As one-seventh of the population of the United States and Canada is insured in the Metropolitan, the lowering of the death rate vitally affects the entire country. Eight years ago the Company built a sanitarium at Mount McGregor to care for sick members of its staff. In the first seven years there were 896 cases of Tuberculosis discharged. The reports show that 80% of these employees are back at work. For five years the Metropolitan has supported a demonstration of health work in Framingham, Mass., a manufacturing town. The Tuberculosis death rate in that time has been cut in two. The Metropolitan issues a booklet telling how to prevent, how to cure Tuberculosis. A free copy of "A War On Consumption" will be mailed to all who ask for it.

HALEY FISKE, *President*

Published by
METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY—NEW YOR



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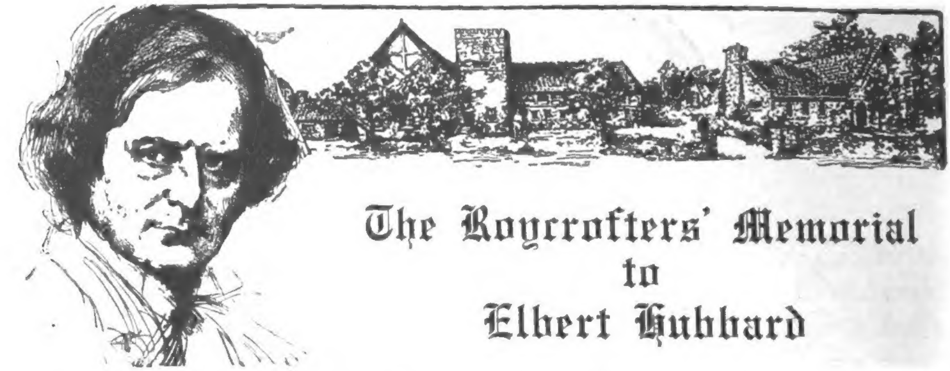


The Roycrofters' Memorial to Elbert Hubbard

Following Hubbard's tragic death on the "Lusitania" in 1915, announcement wa made from East Aurora that the Philistine Magazine would be discontinued. Hubbar had gone on a long journey and might need his "Philistine." Besides, who was to tak up his pen? It was also a beautiful tribute to the father from the son.

The same spirit of devotion has prompted the Roycrofters to issue their Memoria Edition of "Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great." In no other way could they s fittingly perpetuate the memory of the founder of their institution as to liberate th influence that was such an important factor in moulding the career of his genius.

Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great

FOURTEEN YEARS were consumed in the writing of the work that ranks to-da as Elbert Hubbard's masterpiece. In 1894 the series of "Little Journeys to the Home of the Great" was begun, and once a month for fourteen years, without a break, one o these little pilgrimages was given to the world.

These little gems have been accepted as classics and will live. In all there are one hundred and eighty-tw "Little Journeys" that take us to the homes of the men and women who transformed the thought of the time, changed the course of empire and marked the destiny of civilization. Through him, the ideas, th deeds, the achievements of these immortals have been given to the living present and will be sent echoin down the centuries.

As a writer Elbert Hubbard stands in the front rank of the Immortals. One of the ablest writers i America, Ed Howe, called him "the brightest man in the writing game."

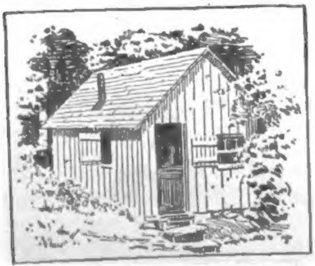
Few businessmen have left institutions that reflect as much credit upon their founder, and yet th Roycroft Shops were launched primarily to demonstrate his philosophy that "Art is merely the expressio of a man's joy in his work."

No public speaker who gave the platform his whole time appeared before as many audiences in th course of a year as this businessman and writer.

Where did Elbert Hubbard find the inspiration for carrying on his great work? It is no secret at Eas Aurora. It was derived from his own little pilgrimages to the haunts of the Great.

The Memorial Edition of LITTLE JOURNEYS TO THE HOMES OF THE GREAT is complet in 14 volumes, printed on specially made deckle-edge paper containing the Roycroft water-mark, sem flexible binding, each volume handsomely embossed and modeled in colors.

Mail Coupon For Very Special Quotation and Free Little Journey Bookle



The Cabin in the Woods away from the throng where many of the Little Journeys were written.

A limited number of the Memorial sets will be distributed at a very special pri and on easy terms to a few of Hubbard's admirers. If you will mail the coupo to-day we will send you at once all particulars of the Memorial Edition togeth with Little Journey Booklet and a copy of the world-famous essay—"T Message to Garcia."

THE ROYCROFTERS, East Aurora, N. Y.

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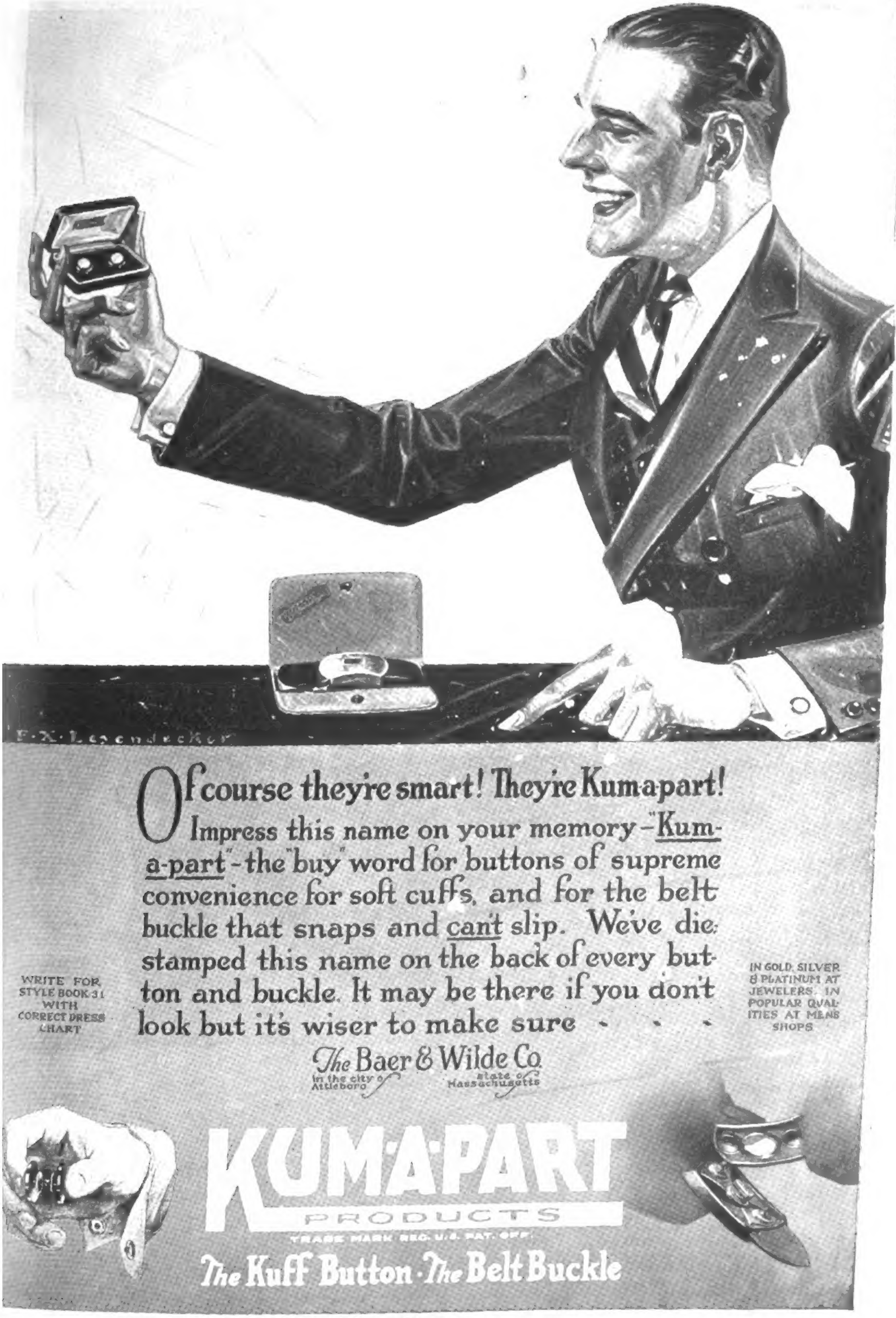

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